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The life of Lord Curzon

THE LIFE OF LORD CURZON

VOLUME THREE

by The Right Honorable
THE EARL OF
RONALDSHAY

"THE life of Lord Curzon falls into three well-defined periods. First, the early years of splendid promise, the brief but brilliant career in the House of Commons, crowned, at the age of 39, by appointment to the post he most desired. Secondly, his Viceroyalty in India, 1898-1905; and thirdly, the last years, 1905-1925, marked by alternate achievement and disappointment. His election as Chancellor of Oxford University, his high post and great responsibility during the war, and finally his failure only by a short neck to obtain the Premiership, and his supersession at the Foreign office."—SIR JOHN MARRIOTT, *London Times.*

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PORTRAIT OF LORD CURZON

By SARGENT.

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THE LIFE OF

LORD CURZON

Being the Authorized Biography of

GEORGE NATHANIEL

MARQUESS CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G

by

THE RT. HON. THE

EARL OF RONALDSHAY

VOLUME THREE

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PREFACE

THE last twenty years of Lord Curzon's life begin and end on a note of pathos. It is, indeed, almost impossible to exaggerate the intensity with which he felt the isolation of his position on his return from India and the shock of Lady Curzon's death. And towards their close came the bitter disappointment caused by his failure to become Prime Minister. But if these years are heavily burdened with pathos they tell a story of most amazing courage. For it may be confidently asserted that few men wracked, as Lord Curzon was, with bodily pain would have maintained the struggle which a continuance in public life demanded. Yet for the last ten years of his life, with the exception of a few months in 1924, he was continuously in office, and for five consecutive years combined the onerous duties of Foreign Secretary with leadership of the House of Lords.

During these last twenty years, too, the wide range of his interests comes clearly into view; for they cover the period of his Chancellorship of Oxford University and of his Presidentship of the Royal Geographical Society, both of which offices he stamped with the impress of his own imperious personality. And the zeal with which, single-handed, he sought to conserve the architectural heritage of Great Britain was only equalled by the enthusiasm with which, aided by a Government Department, he rescued from decay the ancient monuments of India.

So much courage, so gallant a bearing in face of so great difficulties, such passionate devotion and such high ideals provide an example and an inspiration which will long survive him. Upon a wreath laid on his tomb two years and more after his interment, were written these lines:

"A humble token from one he helped to make a man of."[1]

[1] By Sir Bijay Chand Mahtab, G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., I.O.M., Maharajadhiraja Bahadur of Burdwan.

The writer of these words, so eloquent in their sincerity and simplicity, was but one, we may be sure, of many who lived worthier lives for having known him.

For assistance in this the final volume of Lord Curzon's Life my thanks are specially due, apart from Lord Curzon's Literary Trustees, to Sir Herbert Warren, K.C.V.O., for his story of Lord Curzon's Chancellorship and to Lady Curzon of Kedleston for much encouragement and for placing at my entire disposal the mass of Lord Curzon's correspondence with her.

RONALDSHAY.

June, 1928

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By

SIR HERBERT WARREN, K.C.V.O.

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THE LIFE OF LORD CURZON

CHAPTER I

AFTER SEVEN YEARS

1906

Lord Curzon reached England on December the 3rd, 1905. On December the 4th, Mr. Balfour tendered his resignation to the King and on December the 5th, Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman became Prime Minister. The returned exile found parties and policies strangely different from what they had been when he had left England seven years before. His brief holiday in the country in 1904 had been too troubled with domestic anxiety and with the thorny problems which had arisen in connection with his own policy in India, to permit him to give much thought to controversies which were monopolising the attention of politicians at home. On the outstanding question which was agitating the minds of the electors and loosening the party loyalties of a generation, he had no strong leanings one way or the other. He was neither a Protectionist nor an orthodox Free Trader. One thing only in the situation seemed to him to be beyond dispute, and that was that no such shock had been administered to a political party since Mr. Gladstone had driven the wedge of Irish Home Rule into the heart of the Liberal party on the eve of his own entry into the House of Commons twenty years before.

He had been doubtful from the first of the merits of Mr. Chamberlain's programme; but he had never been in doubt as to its almost certain effect upon the fortunes of the Unionist party.

> "I do not believe that the continued existence of the Empire depends upon Preferential Tariffs (though I am personally ready to throw away any number of 'fly-blown phylacteries'). But it looks to me as if the future existence of the Unionist Party for some years at any rate, were likely to be compromised by the manner in which the question has been raised."[1]

Such observation of the trend of events as he had made in 1904 had confirmed him in this belief. "I do not think that Chamberlain's views are making way in the country," he told Lord Ampthill, "and I believe that our party will be beaten at the next election by an overwhelming majority."[2]

He had always been an admirer of Mr. Chamberlain's courage and had delighted in his robust Imperialism, but he had never felt great confidence in his judgment. And now, as he saw him carrying the fiery cross of the new Protection across the land, making the tactical blunders to which his impetuosity had more than once committed him in the past, announcing an enquiry *after* instead of *before* commending his policy to the country—the worst mistake of all, Lord Curzon thought—he recalled the embarrassments caused to himself as Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs seven years before, by what had seemed to him to be equally impetuous and ill judged excursions on the part of the then Colonial Secretary into the arena of international relations. From the point of view of the Under Secretary Mr. Chamberlain's speeches on the Chinese question had been particularly unfortunate. There had been one speech in which he had outlined a policy which had certainly seemed to be little in accord with the policy of Her Majesty's Government—so far at least as that policy was known. What Mr. Chamberlain was understood to be advising, if not actually forecasting, was an Alliance with one of the foremost military Powers on the continent—one of those entangling Alliances which Lord Salisbury had so far studiously avoided. And the penalty of his impetuosity on that occasion had been a stormy discussion in the House of Commons in which he had been challenged by Her Majesty's Opposition to

[1] Letter to Mr. H. O. Arnold Forster, September 10th, 1903.
[2] Letter to Lord Ampthill, July 19th, 1904.

reconcile his speech with his continuance in office. Of all those who had listened to his explanation the Under Secretary had done so with the greatest degree of apprehension.

> "Chamberlain after some slashing hits at Harcourt and the other side," he told Lord Salisbury in the account which he subsequently gave him of the debate, "came terribly to grief over the effort to explain and defend at the same time that he extenuated and minimised his Birmingham speech. We suffered agonies on the front bench as he proceeded to explain *seriatim* how we were not strong enough without an ally to stand up against Russia in the Far East, to preserve the independence of China, to exercise a controlling influence there or even to maintain 'the open door'!—Meanwhile in all our minds was the reflection—*que diable allait il faire dans cette galère*? Why this dissertation on the high principles of policy from one not primarily responsible for their execution? Of course I breathe not a word of this outside. But to you I may confess that that half hour was one to me of unmitigated gloom."[1]

From that time onwards Mr. Chamberlain's appearances on the platform always filled him with feelings of nervous apprehension. "I wish that Mr. Chamberlain would not make speeches about sands in the hour glass," he wrote from India, "or indeed any speeches at all."[2]

And he no more trusted his judgment in 1906 than he had done in 1898. With the main object of his Tariff Reform campaign—that of drawing closer the bonds of Empire—he was, needless to say, in complete accord. But he thought his procedure crude and his programme ill thought out. India had apparently been altogether overlooked; yet the position of India was clearly one that must be taken into account in any scheme of Imperial Federation on a Tariff basis. And Lord Curzon had lost no time in ordering his Finance Department to collect the necessary data for an adequate statement of India's case—data which had provided the basis in

[1] Letter dated June 12th, 1898.
[2] Letter to Lord Selborne, September 28th, 1899.

due course of an official presentation of the Government of India's views. But the fact that the initiative in the matter had had to come from himself, had not been calculated to give him confidence in Mr. Chamberlain's grasp of the problem which he had set out to solve.

> "Of course he forgot all about India when he launched it (his scheme)," he wrote in August 1903. "I often wonder what would have become of him and us, if he had ever visited India. He would have become the greatest Indian Imperialist of the time. The Colonies would have been dwarfed and forgotten, and the pivot of the Empire would have been Calcutta. Not having enjoyed this good fortune we are now forgotten and the Empire is to be bound together (or, as we are told, if the prescription is not taken, destroyed) without any apparent reference to its largest and most powerful unit."[1]

It was certainly no pedantic attachment to an economic doctrine that prevented him from giving his support to the Tariff Reform party, for he took an eminently practical view of such matters. He regarded Political Economy as one aspect only of the science of government—"perhaps the least exact"—and the fiscal policy of a nation as a matter that should be regulated "not by crusted and immutable dogmas, but by considerations of expediency and self-interest," which might very well differ not only in different countries at the same time, but in the same country at different times. He had never in fact regarded Free Trade as "the Law and the Covenant"; and had advised those of his friends who had sought his opinion when the question had first arisen, to beware of committing themselves irrevocably either to Free Trade or to Protection. "I quite understand the difficulties in which you and your friends are placed at home," he wrote in 1903, "and I think I should have advised them to plump a little less strongly for Free Trade than some of them appear to have done. . . . Winston Churchill's attitude seems to me not less dogmatic than that of Mr. Chamberlain."[2]

[1] Letter to Lord Northbrook, August 12th, 1903.
[2] Letter to Sir Ian Malcolm, November 26th, 1903.

His complaint was not that the Tariff Reform party sought to violate an immutable doctrine but rather that they were not sufficiently practical in their own proposals."—no one talks in any thing but generalities," he told Sir Clinton Dawkins, " and I want to get to business and see what happens in the first concrete case. Show me exactly what any one Colony is prepared to do. Threaten some foreign country and let me see what will come of it." But this was precisely what he could not persuade anyone to do.

> " Russia, in order to punish England for the Sugar Convention," he reminded his correspondent, " increased her duty on Indian tea. I thought I would give these doughty reformers a lead, so I wired home and offered to raise our Indian tax on Russian petroleum. The Cabinet might have been expected to jump at it—a first illustration ! But they shied at once, for Russia threatened to punish us, raising some other tax against Great Britain. Accordingly nothing happened." [1]

These various considerations confirmed him in his belief that the Unionist party was heading for disaster and added to his determination not to accept any share of the responsibility for it.

> " For my own part," he told Sir Schomberg McDonnell, early in 1905, " whatever the future I shall be glad to be out of the next Election. I certainly would not stand for the House of Commons nor would I take any active part in the contest. I have not the slightest objection to a policy of retaliation. But to regard it as a positive programme upon which Elections can be won or a party enthused seems to me absurd. I view the present position of the party with intense distress and almost dismay. Chamberlain has utterly broken it to pieces and will not I believe re-unite it on a protectionist basis. We may come in again after some time because of Radical mistakes but not by making Protection a one plank programme. On the other hand A.J.B.'s programme, though innocuous, seems to me from the platform point of view even worse. We can retaliate

[1] Letter to Sir Clinton Dawkins, November 11th, 1903.

now if we have the pluck, and even supposing the country were to ratify the policy, I doubt our making use of it. A fiscal policy can only be successfully enforced if it has a good deal of backing on both sides. No Conservative Government would make retaliatory arrangements that were certain to be reversed by the Liberals a few years later. I have, therefore, not the slightest desire to carry any standard in the fiscal campaign. I regard the whole thing as a huge mistake and do not believe that the party will pull itself together again until it has reverted to saner lines and much more important things."[1]

During his brief stay in England after his return from India, he received offers of half a dozen safe seats including a flattering invitation tendered to him "in no party spirit but on national grounds," by a very large number of bankers, merchants and others interested in the Trade and Commerce of the City of London; but he adhered firmly to his resolve and refused to be drawn into the contest.

Dissatisfaction with political developments was not, however, the only cause of a certain distaste for life in England of which he was conscious at this time. He was living under the influence of that reaction which no man who has served his country in a high administrative capacity abroad, can fail to experience on his return. More especially is this the case if his service has been in India where, apart altogether from his administrative work, he has been the centre of a semi-royal court and has had at his beck and call a large and varied entourage. Lord Curzon, who had thrown himself with so much zest into the social and ceremonial side of his duties in India and had attached so great an importance to the dignity of his office, must have felt the change acutely even in the most favourable circumstances. And the circumstances of his return had been far from favourable. Generous recognition of his work in India had been accorded him in the press, and he had been warmly welcomed by the rank and file of the Conservative party. But his relations with the party leaders were necessarily strained, and

[1]Letter dated February 23rd, 1905.

for this reason proposals made for according him a public welcome were marked by a certain degree of hesitation. A plan for entertaining him at a public banquet halted and finally, at his own request, was dropped. Such a dinner, he pointed out, would scarcely be a compliment unless it was attended by the leading members of both political parties and by all who had served as Viceroy, Governor, Lieutenant-Governor and Commander-in-Chief in India. But would the members of the late Government be willing to attend? "Either the best that can be given or nothing would be my own feeling," he explained when sounded on the matter. "It would of course be marked if the late Government . . . were wholly to abstain."[1]

The time was soon to come when Lord Curzon's difficulty was to choose amongst the number of invitations that poured in upon him. "Being more or less detached," he told Lord Selborne two years later, "I am expected to attend every dinner and give away every prize in the kingdom." But during the first months of his return, he remained aloof, and it was not until April, and then as the guest of a purely non-political body, the Pilgrims, under the chairmanship of Lord Roberts, that he made his first public appearance and delivered his first speech since leaving India.

He had, in fact, thrown out roots which had struck too deep into the soil of that country to permit him as yet to adjust himself to the demands of public life in England. "My heart is still in poor old India," he admitted to Ian Malcolm. And after a short three weeks in England, at the end of 1905, he withdrew to the South of France, whence he could view the progress of events at home in the comfortable perspective given them as much by his own attitude of detachment as by actual distance from the scene, while devoting himself to those Indian matters which still loomed so large on his mental horizon. A selection of his Indian speeches for publication in England was passing through the press; and he gave to the preparation of the volume the minute attention to detail to which all his publishers found themselves obliged to submit. "I think that like many photogravure portraits my likeness is much too dark," he wrote. "I might almost be a Hottentot. Can I not be relieved of

[1] Letter to Sir S. McDonnell, December 28th, 1905.

this suspicion?"[1] Even the size of the pages excited his adverse comment. He compared them with those of a volume of the "Life of Lord Granville," which he happened to have with him, and found them a quarter of an inch narrower. He wanted to know the reason —"my book ought not to be a whit narrower than that book," he exclaimed.[2] So far as possible matters were adjusted to meet his wishes, and on April the 20th, the speeches with notes by the author and an introduction by Sir Thomas Raleigh were submitted to the public.

His comments on affairs at home were those of a mildly interested and somewhat cynical spectator. Everyone in England seemed to him to "talk, chatter, gossip and shout"; but nobody *did* anything. It was "*far niente* without the *dolce*." The landslide suffered by the Unionist Party was no surprise to him; the temper of the new House of Commons was.

> "Politics are in a strange way," he wrote in March, "Winston kicking over the traces and making indiscreet and verbose speeches. A.J.B. eternally pirouetting on an eternal dialectical wire amid yells of execration from the newly constituted House; Joe unable to grapple with the fierce and contemptuous Philistinism of the Radical majority; the Labour Members impressing everyone by ability, sincerity and eager desire to see something done; a new Tory light named Smith sprung up with a brilliant first oration from Liverpool; the party still hopelessly sundered on Tariff question and at present shrieking for the blood of E. Clarke and R. Cecil. Milner about to be publicly censured by the House of Commons . . ."[3]

One thing added to his sense of isolation and neglect. Seven years of his life and strength he had given to India. Health—and very possibly his career—he had offered up in willing sacrifice upon the altar of public duty. In spite of the fact that the curtain had been rung down upon a stage clouded with the dust of con-

[1] Letter to Messrs. Macmillan, February 27th, 1906.
[2] *Ibid.*, January 15th, 1906.
[3] Letter to Sir Ian Malcolm, March 18th, 1906.

troversy, the outstanding value of his Viceroyalty had been freely recognised in the press. Yet he alone of a long line of Indian Viceroys remained without official recognition of his services. The omission was all the more marked by contrast with the acknowledgment accorded not merely to previous Viceroys—Lord Elgin and Lord Lansdowne had both received the Garter—but to others among his own contemporaries whose service abroad has been brilliant, but not more brilliant, surely, than his own. Neither Cromer in Egypt nor Milner in South Africa had been thus pointedly ignored. His known unwillingness to accept any honour from the Government which, by refusing him their support, had driven him to resignation, did not, in his opinion, justify the continued neglect from which he suffered, for they had been replaced by a new Government within a few days of his relinquishing his charge. Nor could it be argued that in such cases the bestowal of an honour was a party matter, for Lord Lansdowne had been honoured on the recommendation of a Liberal, and Lord Elgin on that of a Conservative Prime Minister.

Pondering upon this and other circumstances attending his return from exile, he may well have reflected bitterly upon the contrast which it provided to the picture of it which, during those long years of absence, he had so often conjured up. In place of the joyous re-union with the intimate friends of seven years ago, there lay across his path the splintered fragments of at least one life-long friendship; in place of the plaudits of grateful and admiring colleagues there hung about him an atmosphere of chill neglect. Even the door to public life, in which for something like a quarter of a century he had lived and moved and had his being, seemed suddenly closed against him, for added to his own disinclination to stand for the House of Commons was the opinion of his Sovereign, emphatically expressed, that no ex-Viceroy ought to return to the rough and tumble of political life inseparable from candidature for the Lower Chamber; while entry to the Second Chamber which, in view of the office which he had filled, seemed to him to be his almost as of right, was obstinately denied him.

His cup seemed full indeed. "One wonders when the hail storm that rains upon us is to stop," he wrote in the spring of this first

year at home; "we are nearly beaten to the ground."[1] Yet before the year was many weeks older a final and more crushing blow was dealt him, for in July, Lady Curzon, with whom in all the ups and downs of life he had shared in tenderest intimacy the joys of victory and the sorrows of defeat, was taken from him.

Strewn across the pages of these volumes are to be found indications of the ties by which these two people were united. And it is important that the character of their relations should be realised; for no portrait of Lord Curzon which did not take into account the depth of devotion of which he was capable—and which he did actually lavish on Lady Curzon—would be a true one. He himself uttered a profound truth when he wrote in a letter to Lady Curzon—"most men are not understood of their own generation, for human nature is really very complex, and yet ignoring our own complexity, we expect every one else to be simple."[2] How complex a nature was Lord Curzon's must long since have become clear; and it was not the least part of its complexity that, while intellectually he had always been unusually mature, he remained throughout his life curiously childlike in his emotions. His religious faith, as I have had occasion to point out ere now, was almost on a par with that of a good, but incurious boy. And in daily life, for all his seeming strength and self-sufficiency, he was extraordinarily dependent upon others for his happiness. When the race was to the swift and the battle to the strong, he must have someone to whom to bring the spoils of victory. Still more when failure dogged his footsteps must he have someone to whom to lay bare his soul. With an amazing wealth of sympathy and understanding, Lady Curzon had from the first given him in full measure the intellectual and emotional companionship which he craved. In India where other intimacies were denied him, he turned with ever increasing dependence and delight to the one source of comfort which was open to him. And no man ever received in greater abundance than he did, the precious gift for which he asked. "There is no happiness so great to a woman," she wrote, "as the admiration she can feel to the depths of her heart for her Belovedest."

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon.
[2] Letter dated November 30th, 1904.

Her serious illness in the autumn of 1904 had shaken Lord Curzon to the foundations of his being. " Amid all the great misery that we have been through," he wrote on November the 25th, on the eve of his departure for India, " there shines out the consolation of many happy hours and tender moments and the memory of your beautiful and ineffaceable love. We have been drawn very close by this companionship in the furnace of affliction and I hope that it may leave me less selfish and more considerate in the future. To me you are everything and the sole thing in the world ; and I go on existing in order to come back and try to make you happy."

His return to India without her had brought back poignant memories of former days. " We had such a delicious day," she had written in her diary, when describing one of their brief holidays in the hills near Simla six years before. " I trudged about with George from one beat to another, and as birds were plentiful he had excellent sport. The little Maharaja who hovered near us kept begging me to get into his dhoolie. He could not understand a woman who walked all day behind guns." And now as he landed at Bombay to take up once more, but this time alone, the burden of the Viceroyalty, the contrast with that earlier landing in 1899 was more than he could bear and he broke down miserably when, in proposing his health, Lord Lamington made a touching reference to Lady Curzon's absence. At Calcutta the familiar, but now untenanted rooms at Government House seemed to mock at him. " I have not dared to go into your room," he wrote, " for fear that I should burst out crying. And, indeed, I am utterly miserable and desolate. Nobody to turn to or talk to, memories on all sides of me and anxiety gnawing at my heart. . . . It is a misery even to tear myself from writing to you and never in my life have I felt so forlorn and cast down."[1]

And then had come the unexpected and joyful news that she was well enough to travel—"Was not yesterday the happiest day for years ?" he sang. " For I got Frank's amazing telegram to say that you were actually coming. . . . I could hardly credit it and I went dancing off to the Belvedere Ball (usually the most hateful of functions) in an almost indecent state of glee. I told everybody and

[1]Letter dated December 13th, 1904.

they were all in a wild state of exultation. K. looked a new man and the room was one vast smile."[1] From the depths of depression he rose on a wave of hope to dizzy heights of joy—"This is positively the last letter that I can write to you before we meet in person. My heart dances at the thought of you drawing steadily closer over the leagues of ocean." It would be ten days, he calculated, before the letter would reach her, but four days after that she would herself be with him and "the long deep chasm of separation" would have been filled up. One thought dominated every other—that she had turned back from the very threshold of death's portals and had risen from her bed of suffering to return to him. "This will be like beginning life again after a hideous interlude and all my efforts will be directed to make the new life happy and sweet—happier and sweeter if possible than the old. Every night and morning I thank God that you are coming out."[2]

At this glorious prospect joy welled up from his innermost being and expressed itself elementally in song. In a volume entitled "War Poems and Other Translations," published by Lord Curzon in 1915, appeared one poem described as a Love Song from the Indian—

"I would have torn the stars from the Heavens for your necklace,
I would have stripped the rose-leaves for your couch from all the trees,
I would have spoiled the East of its spices for your perfume,
The West of all its wonders to endower you with these.

"I would have drained the ocean, to find its rarest pearldrops,
And melt them for your lightest thirst in ruby draughts of wine;
I would have dug for gold till the earth was void of treasure,
That, since you had no riches, you might freely take of mine.

"I would have drilled the sunbeams to guard you through the daytime,
I would have caged the nightingales to lull you to your rest;
But love was all you asked for, in waking or in sleeping,
And love I give you, sweetheart, at my side and on my breast."

[1] Letter dated January 21st, 1905.
[2] Letter dated February 16th, 1905.

The words were Lord Curzon's own—his hymn of thanksgiving offered up at Simla in 1905 as he stood on the threshold of what did, indeed, seem to him to be a fresh lease of life, snatched from the very jaws of death. Alas! The new life dawned only to die away again; and when the blow fell it struck him with stunning force. "I have seen it coming," he wrote on July the 22nd, 1906, only four days after her life had ebbed away, "and dared not avow it to her or even to myself. . . . We lay her to rest peacefully, no one here, no show. This is as she would have wished."[1]

Bowed low with grief Lord Curzon remained alone, his sole distraction the answering of the flood of letters of condolence that poured in upon him. "I have never got further than this," he wrote from Kedleston on August the 9th, "where I have been hiding my head in loneliest misery."[2] And time was slow in dulling the edge of pain, for twelve months later he wrote, "I am conscious of no courage, only a sort of mute endurance."[3]

How widespread was the sympathy which his grief evoked was demonstrated by the mass of messages—over 1,150—which he received. Of these he answered with his own hand during those sombre August days not less than eight hundred and fifty.

[1]Letter to Sir Ian Malcolm. [2]*Ibid.*
[3]Letter to Sir S. McDonnell, July 21st, 1907.

CHAPTER II

RETURN TO PUBLIC LIFE

1907-1908

Deprived for the time being of the opportunity of entering Parliament, Lord Curzon cast about for work of public usefulness which would give him the occupation without which life became intolerable. He was fortunate that at this time of enforced leisure the Chancellorship of Oxford University fell vacant. The post was one in connection with which his name had been mentioned while still in India. But though it was one which possessed great attraction for him he realised that to allow his name to be put forward while still abroad would be a mistake; and he had dismissed the matter from his mind. When, therefore, on the death of Lord Goschen in 1907, the post again fell vacant, he eagerly seized the chance of becoming a candidate for it.

His selection as Chancellor appeared to be assured, when an unwonted interest was given to the matter by an unexpected announcement that there was to be a contest and that the rival candidate would be no less a person than Lord Rosebery. The result as it turned out was never in doubt, for Lord Curzon was elected by 1,001 votes to 440; after which the University dismissed the matter from mind with the comfortable reflection that it had been, after all, a case of much ado about nothing. It was recalled that from the 15th century, when the active duties of the office had been taken over by the Vice-Chancellor, the Chancellor had become a figure-head whose existence was scarcely remembered except at his first Encænia, when it was customary for him to appear in a

INSTALLATION OF LORD CURZON
as Chancellor of Oxford University, May 11th, 1907

special gown all glorious with gold, to confer honorary degrees on distinguished men selected for the honour by himself.

It was, perhaps, the reflection that to treat any office which he held as a sinecure was not exactly Lord Curzon's way, that led to second thoughts of a somewhat different nature. The powers of the Chancellor, it was now remembered, though latent were not lost. It was even legally possible for a Chancellor to reside at Oxford and to play an important part in the government of the University. And from some points of view a Chancellor bent on reform from within might be preferable to a Royal Commission imposed on the University from without. Such ideas spread quickly and before many days were over there were people who began to wonder whether the new Chancellor might not display his well known energy by coming to live in Oxford and assuming direction of the University's affairs. It is true that the probability of this happening seemed scarcely great enough seriously to alarm the reactionary party in the University; though it was also not so small as altogether to deprive the party of reform of hope. How quickly—when the necessity for doing so arose—opinion in University circles accommodated itself to the idea of an active Chancellor is clear from a letter written by Lord Curzon himself within a few months of his election to the post—

> "The Oxford Chancellorship I find a great responsibility. First there is the Oxford Appeal which I have headed and to which"—here came a typical touch—"any contribution from you of £100, or upwards, will be warmly welcome. Then we have to reform ourselves in order to escape a Royal Commission, and it appears to be generally conceded that it is my duty to initiate and organise the reform. But to reform a University is like reconstituting a Church . . ."[1]

But the story of the ability and zeal with which Lord Curzon threw himself into the discharge of his high academic duties and of the ultimate advantage accruing to Oxford therefrom, is told with intimate knowledge by Sir Herbert Warren; and it is to

[1] Letter to Lord Selborne dated August 9th, 1907.

chapter VI, consequently, that the reader interested in Lord Curzon's activities in this new sphere of public work is invited to refer.

So formidable a task as that upon which Lord Curzon had now embarked at Oxford would have been sufficient in itself to fill the time and tax the energies of most men. It did not, however, prevent him from chafing at the fate which still barred the way to his return to active political life. Events of the utmost importance were taking place in the very sphere in which his own especial interests lay. As regarded India, Mr. Morley, in spite of his bold words on the eve of the Election, had found on taking charge at the India Office that it was one thing to talk about reversing the policy of your predecessor while out of office, but quite another thing to do so when actually in a position to translate your words into action. Mr. Morley had, indeed, made use of very strong language while he was still in opposition. With the sanction of the Secretary of State, he said, Lord Curzon had been chased out of power by the military. "I hope," he told those whom he was addressing, "you are fully alive to this. If there is one principle more than another that has been accepted in this country since the day when Charles I lost his head, it is this—that the Civil Power shall be supreme over the military Power." Yet the India Office had been guilty of this great departure "from those standard maxims of public administration which have been practically sacred in this island ever since the days of the Civil War."[1] And there is no doubt that when a few weeks later Mr. Morley found himself in charge of matters at the India Office, it was his intention to effect important changes in the system of military administration which had been imposed upon the Government of India by Mr. Balfour's Government.

But Mr. Morley soon found that circumstances had changed. In place of Lord Curzon there was now in India a Viceroy who had accepted office with the knowledge that his first great task would be to give effect to the scheme laid down in the Despatch of May the 31st, 1905, and who had immediately set to work to draw up the necessary rules. His draft of them had actually reached Mr. Morley in the middle of the Election when he was far too fully occupied

[1] Speech at Arbroath in October, 1905.

to give a thought to it, and he had referred the matter to a Committee at the India Office pending his own return to London.

This, then, was the position with which Mr. Morley found himself confronted when he settled down at the India Office—in India a Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief at one with his own Council in Whitehall on the question at issue. Could he, a Secretary of State of a few days standing only, overrule this formidable combination of authorities? He came quickly to the conclusion that he could not. There was, however, one straw at which he grasped—not a very substantial one but still something to lay hold of. On the question of the position and powers of the Secretary to the Government of India in the new Army Department, that Government were themselves divided. Mr. Morley sided with the dissentients against the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief, and took credit to himself for placing the new Secretary in as independent a position as a written rule could give him. He did not imagine that this would altogether satisfy Lord Curzon, but he shrugged his shoulders and explained the circumstances which in his view had altered the case. He admitted that he did not regard his scheme as one which was likely to last. He thought that it would probably have to be reconsidered when Lord Kitchener left India; but he was strongly of opinion that even a provisional, tentative and dubious scheme was better than an indefinite prolongation of the controversy.[1]

Lord Curzon at once realised that the new Secretary of State had found discretion the better part of valour. He attached little value to the latter's vaunted safeguard against a military dictatorship provided by the Secretary to the Government of India in the Army Department. But, debarred from calling attention to the matter in Parliament, he had little hope of gaining the public ear. The correspondence columns of the press provided him with his only means of bringing the matter to the notice of the public, and, oppressed with the feeling that he would be untrue to India if he remained silent in face of the latest scene in what appeared to him to have been "a drama of supreme political unwisdom," he set forth his case in a letter of more than two columns in *The Times*.

[1] Letter from Mr. Morley to Lord Curzon, dated February 7th, 1906.

But all who were genuinely interested in the controversy, on whichever side of it their opinions lay, had long since made up their minds upon the question, while it was of far too technical a character in its details to enlist the interest of the general reader. And Mr. Morley had proved a true prophet when he had told Lord Curzon before the publication of his Despatch, that, whatever the merits or demerits of his decision, he had not the smallest doubt that when Parliament met the strongly prevalent opinion would be in favour of the storm being abated.

The Government's decision on the question of Indian Military Administration was not the only one of special interest to Lord Curzon that came to the fore during the early days of Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman's Administration. During the summer of 1907 it became known that His Majesty's Government had arrived at an Agreement with the Russian Government defining their respective interests in those regions which lay between the frontiers of India and of the Tsar's dominions in Central Asia. A Convention was in fact signed at St. Petersburg on August the 31st, and was ratified on September the 23rd. Lord Curzon's opinion of it was quickly formed.

> "The Russian Convention," he wrote on September the 25th, "is in my view deplorable. It gives up all that we have been fighting for for years, and gives it up with a wholesale abandon that is truly cynical in its recklessness. Ah, me, it makes one despair of public life. The efforts of a century sacrificed and nothing or next to nothing in return. When Parliament meets there ought to be, but I suppose will not be, a demonstration in force."[1]

That part of the Agreement which defined the spheres of interest of Great Britain and Russia in Persia certainly bore some resemblance to the plan which he had once described in a letter to the same correspondent as "a compartment system," consisting of alternate blocks of interest—a plan which being of the nature of patchwork would be likely to go the way of all patchwork quilts.[2] At anyrate it definitely recognised a large central block of Persian territory

[1] Letter to Lord Percy.

[2] Vol. II, ch. XXV.

lying between a Russian block on the north-west and a British block on the south-east and running down to the waters of the Persian Gulf, in which Great Britain undertook not to oppose the grant to Russian subjects of any concessions whatever, and thus threw overboard the claim which Lord Curzon had constantly put forward that Great Britain should tolerate no advance of Russian influence anywhere in Southern Persia, still less anywhere in the neighbourhood of the Persian Gulf.

Here, then, was a question of first class importance upon which Lord Curzon was specially qualified to speak, and which was bound to be debated in the two Houses of Parliament, from both of which he was excluded. The question of a peerage for him consequently became acute.

Looking back from this distance of time upon the curiously chequered history of his efforts, first to escape from, and later to enter, the House of Lords, it is impossible not to see in it a certain element of comedy. The story of the strenuous though unavailing efforts which he made during the early years of his own Parliamentary life to guard against an enforced translation to the House of Lords on the death of Lord Scarsdale, has been told in Volume I. Service in India had tempered, though it had not wholly removed, his dislike of this prospect; and when, during his holiday in England in 1904, the question of his being offered a peerage on his return had been mooted, he had not definitely rejected the proposal. The difference with the Cabinet which had resulted in his resignation had altered the position so far as the Conservative Government were concerned. Lord Curzon, bitterly resentful of his treatment at their hands, was in no mood to accept any honour on their recommendation; and the Prime Minister, conscious of the reception which any such offer on his part was destined to meet with, very naturally refrained from making one. Lord Curzon aware of the opinion of King Edward that, as one who had been Viceroy, it was fitting that he should sit in the Upper Chamber rather than in the House of Commons, and basing his opinion on recent precedents, felt confident that no difficulty in securing the peerage which he was now as vehemently anxious to obtain as he had formerly been to avoid, was to be anticipated on the score of

the political complexion of the Government which had come into power at the close of Mr. Balfour's Administration.

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, however, took a different view. He did not see his way to recommending for a peerage a public servant whose claims to that distinction had been rejected—or at any rate ignored—by a Conservative Prime Minister under whose Administration his service had been rendered. Hence the unhappy comedy—the Sovereign anxious to confer a peerage upon a great public servant of the value of whose service he held a genuinely high opinion, but unwilling to overstep the bounds of constitutional propriety by pressing his wishes in face of the deliberate silence of his constitutional advisers; a Conservative Prime Minister willing on the merits of the case to make the necessary recommendation but restrained from doing so by his knowledge that the offer coming from him would be rejected ; a Radical Prime Minister, not over anxious, we may suppose, to step out of his way to facilitate the return to Parliamentary life of so doughty an opponent, standing on the strict letter of constitutional practice and refusing to rush in where his predecessor had feared to tread ; and finally the irritated victim of this fortuitous combination of circumstances naturally, though it must be admitted illogically, angry—when he became aware of the grounds on which Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman refused to move—with Mr. Balfour for having refrained from offering him something which he had been determined to refuse.

In later years the drama which had begun as light comedy in the opening years of his Parliamentary life and had passed on into more serious comedy on his return from India, ended on a note of tragedy. The long deferred Earldom was conferred by King George in November 1911 ; and in 1921 Lord Curzon, who had then been Leader of the House of Lords for four years, a member of the War Cabinet and Foreign Secretary, became a Marquess. Yet by the irony of fate it was his membership of the Upper House which he had at one time striven so strenuously to escape and which he had subsequently found so difficult of attainment, that was held to disqualify him from filling the highest office in public life to which, through all the vicissitudes of a long and strenuous career, it had been his steadily cherished ambition to attain.

In 1907, however, this *dénouement* was unforeseen ; and the problem of the moment was how to give effect to his desire to return to political life. A possible solution was first suggested to him by Lord Lansdowne. The sudden death of Lord Kilmaine in the autumn of 1907 created a vacancy in the Irish representative peerage. On his appointment to the Viceroyalty, Lord Curzon had accepted an Irish peerage with a view to returning to the House of Commons. But as an Irish peer he was equally eligible for election to the House of Lords, and, provided that he commended himself to the members of this small and specialised electorate, there appeared to be no reason why he should not become a candidate for the vacancy. He was assured of the support of some at least of the more prominent of the Irish peers ; but the body as a whole was always resentful of anything that savoured of dictation, and the hope that was cherished in some quarters that if Lord Curzon's name was put forward he might be returned unopposed, was doomed to disappointment.

From the point of view of the average voter, Lord Curzon's candidature was not, indeed, an ideal one. To begin with, an Irish peer when once elected to represent his fellow peers, remained their representative for life. No vacancy was created in the event of his succeeding to an English peerage, and only on his death could his place be filled. What, it was asked, would become of their special representation when in due course Lord Curzon succeeded to the English peerage to which he was the heir ? Moreover the questions in which they expected their representatives to take particular interest were purely Irish questions—the wrongs of the Irish landlords and of the oppressed minority in Ireland generally. They may well have thought that even if he sat as a representative Irish peer, Lord Curzon would scarcely be likely to handle such matters in quite the same spirit as would a man who was familiar with them from personal and, often enough, bitter experience. Still less was this to be expected when in due course he succeeded to an English peerage. Lord Curzon himself was not indifferent to these considerations and in the Address in which he set forth his reasons for seeking their support he explained his position with perfect candour. He was unfortunately debarred, he said, from

entering the House of Lords in what might be regarded as the more ordinary way, by the refusal of the Prime Minister to allow him to take his place with all the other ex-Viceroys of India upon its benches. He readily admitted that there were many considerations which might induce them to prefer a peer directly connected with Ireland. At the same time he had been given to understand that his return to public life through the only channel which now appeared to be open to him, might be viewed with favour by those concerned.

Two other candidates went to the poll; and when the voting closed in January 1908, it was found that Lord Curzon had been elected by a majority of two votes over his nearest competitor who, in his turn, was only the same number of votes in front of the third candidate on the list.

When writing to Lord Lansdowne to thank him for the help which he had given him he added—"I propose on a very early day to call attention to the Anglo-Russian Agreement and to make a speech upon it. My views are unfavourable. But I shall express them with reasonable moderation and shall criticise not the policy or the principle involved, but only the nature of the bargain made. I cannot, of course, remain silent having devoted my whole working life to the subject."[1]

The opportunity which he sought occurred on February the 6th, when he rose to move for papers in connection with the Convention. He followed closely the lines which he had indicated in his letter to Lord Lansdowne. He admitted that he was in favour of a policy of understandings and alliances rather than of continued isolation—"a splendid but sometimes precarious and possibly even dangerous isolation." But there was a limit to the price which we ought to pay for such understandings and alliances. And he proceeded to show with the remorseless logic which his intimate knowledge of the details of the arrangement enabled him to command, that the bargain was one in the making of which we had been hopelessly outmanœuvred by our astute opponents.

The sphere of influence which we had assigned to Russia embraced eleven out of the twelve cities that in the whole of Persia could

[1]Letter dated January 23rd, 1908.

boast a population of more than 30,000, and seven out of the eleven recognised trade routes ; the sphere which we had been content to accept for ourselves, one such city and a solitary trade route. While attaching supreme importance to strategical considerations, we had altogether lost sight of our immediate commercial, political, economic and telegraphic interests.

> "I have been reluctantly driven to the conclusion," he declared, "that whatever may be the ultimate effects produced, we have thrown away to a large extent the efforts of our diplomacy and our trade for more than a century ; and I do not feel at all sure that this Treaty in its Persian aspect will conduce either to the security of India, to the independence of Persia or to the peace of Asia."

He thought that in the case of Afghanistan we had obtained nothing in return for the very substantial concessions that we had made ; while in the matter of Tibet we had not merely made sacrifices but had been guilty of absolute surrender. He thought the Annex to the Agreement concerning the Chumbi Valley deplorable ; all the more so because it placed the seal upon the decision of the late Government overruling the Government of India on the question of the occupation of the valley by Great Britain. The seventy-five years of occupation contemplated by Colonel Younghusband and the Tibetan authorities at Lhasa, and provided for in the Treaty negotiated by the former, had been reduced to three years by the Cabinet in 1904. In the Annex to the Convention of 1907 it was agreed that if for any reason the occupation was not terminated within the three years, the Government of Great Britain would enter into a friendly exchange of views with the Government of Russia on the subject. It had always been a matter of complaint by Lord Curzon that, when the Government had compiled their Blue Book on the Tibetan question, they had deliberately minimised the part which Russian activity in Tibet had played in determining the Indian Government to press for an active policy ; and by so doing had created the false impression that he and his colleagues were urging a policy of adventure for no adequate

reason. Now the successors of Mr. Balfour's Government had actually agreed to talk over the evacuation of a tongue of Tibetan territory, which ran like a wedge into the Indian Empire, with the Government of Russia, whose own borders were not merely many hundreds of miles from the Chumbi Valley but from the nearest frontier of Tibet itself. "The particular Annex as regards the Chumbi Valley," he exclaimed, "unless it is capable of explanation seems to me to be almost a humiliation."

There was one other aspect of the Agreement which he could not refrain from commenting on—the cynical indifference displayed even by a Liberal Government in disposing of other people's property. Had Persia been consulted about the Agreement, he asked?

> "I am almost astounded at the coolness, I might even say the effrontery, with which the British Government is in the habit of parcelling out the territory of Powers whose independence and integrity it assures them at the same time it has no other intention than to preserve, and only informs the Power concerned of the arrangement that has been made after the Agreement has been concluded."

The criticism was given point by subsequent happenings in connection not with Persia but with Afghanistan. It was stipulated in the Agreement that the provisions affecting that country should only come into force when the assent of the Amir had been received. The Amir showed his displeasure at the effrontery of Great Britain and Russia in arranging for the future of his country behind his back, by ignoring the whole proceedings. And it was eventually found necessary for the contracting parties to agree to regard the provisions of the Afghan section of the Convention as being operative without the Amir's consent—a proceeding which naturally discounted the courtesy towards the Amir intended by the original draft.

The discussion of February the 6th, was, of course, of purely academic interest since the Convention had already been signed and ratified; but it served to signalise Lord Curzon's return to public life.

CHAPTER III

ACADEMIC AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES WITH AN INTERLUDE

1908-1911

With the Conservative party in Opposition Lord Curzon's duties in the House of Lords left him ample leisure. And his aloofness from domestic politics at this time, due in part to his dislike of the Tariff controversy, left him free to turn to those many other interests to which he had always been attracted, and from which, after the close of his career in India, he derived, as he once admitted, far more real pleasure than he did from the ups and downs, the victories and defeats, the achievements and failures of political life. For the next few years, until the unforeseen formation of a Coalition Government brought him for the first time into a British Cabinet, he devoted a large share of his time and energies to interests which ministered to the intellectual and æsthetic cravings of his many-sided personality.

Sir Herbert Warren shows how thoroughly he threw himself into his work as Chancellor of Oxford University. For most men this draught at the academic well might have been expected to suffice; for, as was remarked at the time, it had not been usual for great men to be pluralists in these high academic distinctions.[1] Lord Curzon's thirst, however, was not so easily quenched; and when, little more than three months after his election to the Chancellorship, he was approached with a request that he would allow himself to be nominated as the Conservative candidate for the Lord Rectorship of Glasgow University, he readily consented. For the

[1] *Newcastle Journal* of January 20th, 1908.

remaining months of the year the matter was kept secret; but when in January 1908 the nominations were formally made, much piquancy was added to the situation by the fact that Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, whose refusal to facilitate Lord Curzon's return to political life was by then well known, was found to be the Liberal candidate. As matters turned out Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman did not live to carry through the fight; and, on his death in the spring of 1908, Mr. Lloyd George, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, was nominated in his place. Later a third candidate entered the field in the person of Mr. Keir Hardie who came forward as a suppliant for the Socialist vote.

As the day of the election drew near, uncertainty as to the issue gave interest to the contest. The retiring Lord Rector, Mr. Asquith, had won at the previous election by a large majority; and on the eve of the poll Lord Curzon gave expression to his doubts in a letter to Alfred Lyttelton who had gone to Glasgow to address a meeting on his behalf:—"I have not heard anything about the election on Saturday. The candidates seem to be the last people informed or concerned, and for all I know the little Welsh bruiser may leave me a mangled and eviscerated corpse." When the result of the poll was declared it was seen that Lord Curzon had been elected by a small majority over Mr. Lloyd George, the figures being: Lord Curzon 947, Mr. Lloyd George, 935, Mr. Keir Hardie 122. "It was on your shoulders that I climbed," he told Alfred Lyttelton on learning the result, "a joyous as well as strenuous support in the hour of battle."

Although it had become the recognised practice for the Lord Rector to leave the bulk of his duties to be discharged by an Assessor appointed by him to the governing body, the office was not altogether a sinecure. Its occupant was regarded as the representative of the students on the Court of the University—the body which controlled its affairs and over whose deliberations, when present, it was his privilege to preside. Lord Curzon's assumption of office coincided with impending changes in the system of Scottish University training. Curricula and standards were being revised, lectures were being reduced in number and facilities for tutorial instruction added to. And it was the hope of some at least, that at this time

when efforts were being made to bring University education in Scotland into line with the requirements of modern times, Lord Curzon might do much to help and guide the movement. Apart from this, there was the ceremony of Installation to be gone through, including the delivery of a Rectorial Address.

These and all other engagements, however, were destined to undergo postponement. Lord Curzon's health, which had been giving cause for anxiety for some time past, received a fresh set back from an accident while motoring a short time before his election as Lord Rector. " I have had a real bad shock," he told Alfred Lyttelton in October, " and shall probably have to take a long sea voyage." And the new year saw him far from Oxford and Glasgow, drinking in with undisguised delight the new impressions which South Africa afforded him.

His journey from Cape Town to Kimberley had disclosed a land of illimitable spaces. The veld and the kopjes which he had pictured in imagination when he had been hurrying troops from India to save Natal ten years before, were now spread out in stark reality before his gaze. And just as at Tel el Kebir a quarter of a century earlier he had studied the battle field and commented on the conduct of the operations by Sir Garnet Wolseley, so now as he gazed from the window of his room in Kimberley upon the hills of Magersfontein, against which the gallant Highland regiments had been hurled in the calamitous opening phases of the Boer War, he marvelled at the way in which the troops of the relieving force had been despatched time after time across the level surface of the plain, " unprotected by a tree or a bush or a fold in the ground," against those sinister hills, " lined with the finest marksmen in the world."

These things however—poignant though the memories which they evoked might be—were episodes in a chapter of history now happily closed ; and he turned with greater satisfaction to the novel scenes amid which he found himself. It was soon clear that he had lost nothing of his old love of travel. He devoted his attention impartially to the defences and the diamond mines of Kimberley, the latter—" a series of gigantic holes in the ground, perhaps 200 yards or more across and 500 feet deep. At the bottom are the smooth stone walls of what was once a crater, and in the blue soil

packed in the crater the diamonds are found." On a desk in the office of De Beers he saw little heaps of uncut diamonds just as they were extracted from the soil worth £150,000.[1]

The Victoria Falls with their towers of descending foam, the shouting face of the cataract, the thunder of the watery phalanxes as they charged and reeled and were shattered in the bottom of the abyss, the spray spumes whizzing upwards like a battery of rockets into the air—all these overwhelming exhibitions of elemental force held him spellbound and stirred those chords of emotion which always responded exultantly to the appeal of the grand and the beautiful in Nature. Under the influence of such stimulus from without, his artistic faculty always sought expression, and he resorted to his pen much as a painter would resort in similar circumstances to his brush. His description of the Falls of the Zambesi was published in *The Times* of April the 14th, 1909, and was subsequently reprinted in " Tales of Travel," published in 1923.

But it was not merely as a sightseer that he toured the country. South Africa with its great spaces was a fit setting for men of wide vision ; and Lord Curzon soon satisfied himself that one such man, at least, had been given by South Africa to the world. Over all that vast area there seemed to brood, not less powerful in death than in life, the master spirit of Cecil Rhodes. " Every thing in this country," he exclaimed in a letter to his brother, " is Rhodes. His personality amounting to genius ; his large views ; his great undertakings assisted by his colossal wealth dominate everything. Everywhere are his buildings, statues and monuments ; and the country is as proud of him as Corsica might be of Napoleon."[2] When visiting Cape Town he stayed in Rhodes' house—" I had his room and bed," he mentioned ; and from Kimberley he travelled to Bulawayo to visit his grave in the Matoppo Hills. His was the true Imperial spirit ; and behind the movement towards South African Union which he found in progress, he saw the guiding hand of Cecil Rhodes. " I venture to say," he declared at the dinner of the Imperial South African Association held in London in June of that year, " that all those who have been engaged in this great work of

[1] Letter to the Hon. F. N. Curzon, January 11th, 1909.
[2] *Ibid.*

union have felt in their hearts that they were carrying into consummation the results not merely of their own efforts, but of his as well."

There was taking place at Cape Town that which immediately arrested his attention. Here he witnessed not only a new Constitution but, as he believed, a new country struggling to birth. Within the walls of Parliament House the thirty-three foremost men of South Africa, British and Dutch, some of whom had never met and others of whom, only a few years ago, had been engaged in combat on the field of battle, were occupied with a momentous task in the domain of statecraft—no less a one than that of welding the various Colonies with their diverse interests into a splendid and powerful whole. On the main issue Lord Curzon found Briton and Boer at one. Putting from them all memories of the devastating war which had left its relics in the graves that sprinkled the veld with their frequent and pathetic mounds; thinking only of the future and its promise, all were subordinating racial, party and sectional interests to an inspiring loyalty to "the wider cause of South African Union within the sheltering embrace of the British Empire." As to the precise means by which the end was to be attained there was room for legitimate difference of opinion. Federation or Legislative Union? Which of these two ideals was best calculated to carry them to their goal? In spite of the avowed preference of the veteran statesman of Cape Colony, Mr. Hofmeyr, for Federation, Lord Curzon found the tide of opinion flowing strongly, and as he thought rightly, in the direction of a still closer Union.

But it was the complete subordination of all minor considerations to a loftier patriotism and a higher duty displayed by all concerned, that most deeply impressed Lord Curzon and that led him on his return to England to make an earnest appeal to his own countrymen through the columns of *The Times*. There was one disturbing influence in the minds of the people of South Africa; could they count on a similar subordination of party interests in Great Britain?

> "Mindful of a none too happy and a sometimes tragic past, in which the fate of South Africa has been the shuttlecock of political parties in Great Britain, and its inhabitants

have hardly known whether to fear most from the ignorance, the indifference, or the party feuds of their distant rulers, the citizens of the new South African State may be pardoned if they look with some apprehension to the future. In too many instances they have seen that what one party essays another resists; what is done by one Ministry is undone by its successor. It seems almost too good to be true that the truce which in recent years has happily overspread the field of Foreign Affairs, and which to an increasing extent is withdrawing India from the smoke of party contest, should extend its benign influence to the Colonies also, and above all to so scarred a ground of elemental warfare as South Africa. And yet may we not assure them that, if this is not already the case, at least it is the heartfelt desire of the thinking majority of our people that it should become so? May we not tell them that we regard with sympathy and with pride the dawning of a new nationality and the creation of a fresh constituent in our Imperial Confederation; that the co-operation between two races long at discord and recently in strife, but animated by similar virtues and sprung from a not dissimilar stock, is a source to us of unalloyed satisfaction; that with them we desire nothing better than that there should be an end to racial animosity, to political huckstering, and to ignoble feuds; and that their interests—the interests of the future South African Commonwealth, if it is called into being—will be equally safe with all parties in this country, because they will be enshrined in the generous confidence and, I would like to add, in the quickened conscience of the nation?"[1]

It was generally assumed—not altogether without reason—that Lord Curzon was deficient in a sense of humour where his own dignity was concerned. This was not always so. His sense of humour was sufficient on this occasion to cause him to preserve with his private papers an anonymous comment on his article, which reached him on a postcard—"I have read you in *The Times* to-day—two columns of drivelling twaddle."

[1] *The Times* of March 23rd, 1909.

The primary object of his journey, as I have explained, was change of scene and rest. If it supplied the former it can scarcely be said to have been productive of the latter ; for throughout the tour the traveller's restless brain passed rapidly from one subject to another. Before he returned to England he had written single-handed his elaborate Memorandum on the Principles and Methods of University Reform which, as Sir Herbert Warren explains, formed the basis of the changes which were subsequently introduced at Oxford. And it was in the course of this same journey that he discovered, in an unused room at the back of Plantation House in St. Helena, the historic billiard table of Napoleon—a relic which had lain neglected and, indeed, unrecognised for three quarters of a century. It was, in fact, in pursuance of a project which he had formed of writing a book on the concluding years of the life of the Emperor Napoleon at St. Helena, to correct what he regarded as the popular misconceptions on the subject, that he broke his journey at the island. And it was with the same object in view that he acquired some years later that part of the A. M. Broadley Papers relating to St. Helena, which together with certain furniture of the Empire period he bequeathed to Oxford University. It is a matter for profound regret that the stress of public duties during his later years—with the exception of some months in 1924 he was continuously in office during the last ten years of his life—prevented him from carrying out his intention, except to the extent of using some small part of the material which he had collected and which he believed to be the most complete relating to the period in existence, for the purpose of chapters included in his " Tales of Travel " and " Leaves from a Viceroy's Note-Book."

Lord Curzon's absence from England during the winter had necessitated a postponement of his installation as Lord Rector of Glasgow University, since the summer term was inconvenient to the students ; and in the course of a surprise visit paid to the University in October, he arranged for the ceremony to take place in January. But fate was still against him, for in November the House of Lords threw out Mr. Lloyd George's famous Budget, over whose novel and complicated taxes the House of Commons had wrangled in weary perplexity throughout a Session of abnormal bitterness and duration.

And in January Mr. Asquith appealed to the country against what he held to be their arbitrary and unconstitutional behaviour. The date of the long expected Installation was altered, consequently, to February the 25th.

The result of the General Election was not without its effect, however, on the policy of the Unionist Party. It was at last realised that the time had come when reform of the House of Lords could no longer be regarded as a question of purely academic interest; and, as one who in the past had been the most zealous and outspoken advocate of change, Lord Curzon was naturally called into consultation by the leaders of the party. Hence the Lord Rector found himself, a fortnight before the date of his installation with his Address unwritten, involved in urgent work of high political importance; and he requested a further postponement of the function.

The effect on the temper of the Scottish student community was disastrous. Strong exception was taken to what was regarded by them as a contemptuous indifference to their convenience; and at two successive mass meetings of excited undergraduates, resolutions were passed condemning the conduct of the Lord Rector. Lord Curzon was taken completely by surprise. "It is quite intolerable that they should lecture and hector a Lord Rector in that fashion," he wrote on February the 21st.[1] But he was to learn that the Scottish undergraduate was no respecter of persons, and the noise of their ebullient expostulation echoed far and wide. The witty likening of their Lord Rector, by one of them, to Rostand's chanticleer who thought that the sun could not rise without his aid—the inference drawn from Lord Curzon's letter being that he laboured under the impression that if he left London for two days the sun would cease to rise on the British Empire—provided inspiration for the cartoonists of the English press. And altogether so violent was the storm to which his action had given rise, that Lord Curzon seriously contemplated resignation.

This *dénouement* was fortunately avoided by a plebiscite taken among the students as a whole, the result of which was to exonerate him by a large majority of any intentional discourtesy. And at

[1] Letter to Lord Lamington.

long last in January 1911, within nine months of the termination of his three years term of office, the Installation ceremony was performed and the Rectorial Address delivered.

The Address was a memorable one in the annals of the University. Taking the relations of Europe and Asia as his theme he spoke of the political aspirations which had been generated in Eastern countries by recent contact with the democratic nations of the West. But it was his purpose to place such matters in true historical perspective rather than to discuss them on their merits—to depict them as the most recent phase of an age-long story of action and reaction between East and West. He had discussed the place of India in the Empire and the questions which arose naturally out of consideration of that subject, in an Address before the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh fifteen months before; and on this occasion he was at greater pains to paint a picture than to develop and sustain an argument. He lingered fondly over his descriptions of the East as "the home of recondite philosophies and all powerful creeds, of abstruse metaphysics and the mystic cult of the unseen, commingled in bewildering juxtaposition with strange idolatries and savage superstitions"; and again as the abode of "an eternal mystery and an irresistible romance, casting its glamour equally over poets and men of action but confounding all with its inscrutable secrets, and testifying in mournful accents to the limitations of human intellect or the vanity of human ambitions." To him, he declared, Asia was like "some beautiful spirit whose heavy eyelids seem to be always half closed, and who nods, with a half smile on her face, in a land of everlasting dreams."

It must, indeed, have been plain to those who listened to him that, as he spoke to them, he was living over again those enthralling years of travel which had brought him into such intimate contact with the splendour and havoc of the East. He dwelt on her landscapes of "extreme contrast but of wonderful beauty and dominating grandeur, her panorama of vast plains and mighty mountains of utter desolation and soaking verdure; of cities crowded beyond belief and coloured as the rainbow and almost within a stone's-throw placid villages which have known no change since Abraham —the shepherd with his slowly-moving flock and the creaking of

the water-wheels at the wells." He called to mind her amazing wealth, her silks and muslins, her pearls and ivories, her gold and silver and gems; but he spoke also of a squalor that appalled and a filth that festered. The picture that he painted was of a world of bewildering contrasts "splendid and pathetic, sunlit and sombre, rich beyond dreams and poverty-stricken beyond conception, marvellous and commonplace, cultured and barbarous, the greatest of all contrasts and the most paradoxical of all contradictions."

Lord Curzon had intended elaborating the theme and bringing it out in book form, and the type was actually kept standing for many months. But matters of political importance now began crowding in upon him and the type was eventually distributed without the task having been completed.

It was Mr. Lloyd George's Budget of 1909 that had brought Lord Curzon back definitely into the arena of party politics. Up to that time his position *vis-à-vis* the leaders of the Conservative party had been that of an ally rather than of a colleague; and there had been occasions on which he had not hesitated to criticise their action with the freedom which is not infrequently regarded as the most valued privilege of an ally. "In my view," he had told Ian Malcolm in August 1908, "the House of Lords acted unwisely in touching the Old Age Pensions Bill. They ought to have left it severely alone. As it is they invited and received a smart rebuff. I think it was bad generalship." Earlier in the Session he had expressed opinions in his private correspondence which were certainly at variance with the attitude officially adopted by the party—"If the Lords throw out the Temperance Bill (which I hope they wont do as it is not half a bad one; whisper this not in Askalon) they" —the Government—"will dissolve pretty soon knowing that we are not ready..."[1]

His dislike of the Tariff Reform programme had hitherto stood in the way of a more complete reconciliation; and it was the vista of social legislation based on huge and ever expanding subsidies from the State which had been opened up by the Budget of 1909, that tipped the scale in favour of Protection in his mind and removed the last obstacle to his return to the party fold. Remunera-

[1]Letter to Lord Selborne, May 8th, 1908.

tive employment, he now argued, and not subsidised idleness, must be the basis of national prosperity ; and, while our mills and yards lay idle, he saw millions of pounds worth of manufactured goods pouring untaxed into our ports from abroad. " Are we the only wise people in the world," he asked at Leeds, " who go on worshipping Free Trade long after it has become a dilapidated image in an empty shrine ?" There was no longer any doubt where he stood ; and the next time he appeared on a platform—at Oldham in December 1909—it was not merely at his own desire, as the Chairman of the meeting pointedly observed, but at the urgent request of the local Conservative organisation.

The party truce brought about by the lamented death of King Edward on May the 6th, 1910, failed to effect a solution of the Constitutional crisis in which the country was involved ; and if the General Election which followed in December added nothing to the strength of Mr. Asquith's following in the House of Commons, it certainly did not lessen the difficulties of the Unionist party. The hasty adoption by the latter of the Referendum and of Reform of the House of Lords as planks in its platform, had savoured too much of death bed repentance to carry conviction with the average man ; and it was now clear that the Prime Minister was expected by his followers to lose no time in settling the question of the veto. The question, therefore, which was now anxiously debated in Unionist circles was how far Mr. Asquith would be prepared to go in his attempt to compel acceptance of the Parliament Bill. Would he advise a wholesale creation of peers ; or were the hints that he would do so to be attributed to a hope that he could bluff his opponents into that belief ?

Prior to the Election Lord Curzon had been inclined to ridicule the idea of a huge creation of peers for the purpose of forcing the Parliament Bill through the Upper Chamber. " The idea that the House of Lords can be intimidated, or coerced, or cajoled by the threat of the creation of five hundred peers to act in a manner inconsistent with its own conviction or conscience, appears to me a fantastic dream."[1] To select five hundred gentlemen to march like well drilled supers into the House of Lords in order

[1] Speech at Reading, May 5th, 1910.

to vote to reduce the Chamber of which they had been members for five or ten minutes to a nullity and a sham was, he declared, not politics but pantomime which would excite the inextinguishable laughter of the civilised world. Even after the Election he had spoken derisively at a private luncheon of Unionist candidates and M.Ps. of any such proceeding, and had advised his audience—somewhat incautiously as it turned out—to fight in the last ditch and let them make their peers if they dared.

As soon, however, as he realised that the Prime Minister was determined to carry out his threat; that he had received an intimation from the King that he would consider it his duty to act upon the advice tendered to him by his responsible Ministers, and that a creation of peers would be employed, not merely for the purpose of securing the passage of the Parliament Bill, but for enacting Home Rule for Ireland and other radical measures, he reconsidered his position and thenceforward never wavered in his view that in these altered circumstances it would be fatal to the best interests of the country—and not least to the position of the Crown—to force the hand of the Government by standing out longer against the Parliament Bill. He argued his case in a letter which appeared in *The Times* of July the 24th and thereafter a committee met daily at his house for the purpose of organising support for the course recommended by Lord Lansdowne of abstaining from voting on the final stage of the Bill. Lord Lansdowne was unwilling to countenance more than this; Lord Curzon's inclination would have been if not actually to urge, at least to view with approval, a decision on the part of such Unionist peers as shared his views, to join the Government in the lobby rather than acquiesce in the policy of the Diehards under the leadership of Lord Halsbury of forcing the employment of the Royal prerogative. But he trusted that this necessity might not arise.

> "I hope you will not vote with the minority," he begged Lord Roberts, "but that with Lord Lansdowne you will abstain. The protest which you and others desired to make has been made; public attention has been drawn to the outrage of the Bill and the scandalous abuse of the Royal Prero-

gative. Any vote that you give now can either produce no effect or drive into the Government lobby some self sacrificing and conscientious Unionist Peer who will go so far as to vote for the Government sooner than see the peers created. That would be a lamentable result and we desire that no one should be placed in so invidious a position."[1]

Nevertheless throughout the exhausting days which led up to the final scene in the House of Lords, he was in constant touch with those peers who were untrammelled by party ties and were willing to take this course.

On August the 8th in a brilliant speech he moved the official Unionist Resolution, denouncing the advice tendered by the Prime Minister to the Sovereign as "a gross violation of constitutional liberty." And having thus made clear the position of those who were acting with him, he made, two days later, the speech which was intended to bring the fateful debate on the Parliament Bill to a close. Uncertainty as to the result produced an atmosphere of excitement seldom experienced in the decorous proceedings of the Upper Chamber; and when Lord Curzon sat down Lord Halsbury, Lord Rosebery and Lord Selborne rose in quick succession to address the House. Those who chanced to be present, as I was, on the steps of the throne, will not easily forget those last few feverish minutes of a memorable debate. It was impossible to withhold a measure of sympathy and admiration from Lord Halsbury, courageous, stubborn, fighting to the end—a fine epitome of the characteristics of his race—as he solemnly commended his action to the judgment of God and his conscience. Lord Curzon sat pale and angry as amid growing clamour Lord Selborne sprang to the table, and in strident tones and with dramatic gestures made a fierce appeal to the House to defeat the Bill. Few debates in either House in modern times can have exercised so determining an influence upon the actions of so many people. A speech by Lord Camperdown, in which he stated his intention of voting with the Government, determined the Duke of Norfolk and others associated with him who had intended to abstain, to go into the lobby with Lord Halsbury

[1]Letter dated July 30th, 1911.

and his friends; this decision was in its turn responsible for others, who had meant to abstain from voting, joining the Government in support of the Bill. No one knew when the division was called, what the result would be; though it was realised that the balance would swing one way or the other, according to the number of Unionist peers who ended by answering in the affirmative the question whether circumstances demanded of them that they should sacrifice themselves by voting for a measure of which they profoundly disapproved. More than a score did so, and to a crowded and palpitating House the tellers announced the victory of the Government by a majority of seventeen.

The depth of feeling which had been stirred, more particularly by the action of those members of the Conservative party who had voted with the Government, was apparent the same night when, at an excited gathering at the Carlton Club, they were greeted with cries of "Shame" and shouts of "Judas." Lord Curzon, in view of the published advice to the party given by Lord Lansdowne, had decided that as a member of the Conservative Shadow Cabinet he could not himself go beyond the official policy of his party; but he was held responsible—not without reason—for the result of the division, and he felt acutely the hostility which the part which he had played in it excited. And from the worry and vexation and the thanklessness of party politics he turned with relief to other matters. "All these talks and arguings and conferences have nearly finished me off," he had written on July the 20th, when the controversy as to the attitude to be adopted towards the Parliament Bill was at its height. "Public life is all against the collar for me since I am almost always in uneasiness and pain."[1] With his own party hopelessly divided and with life long friends at variance with him, the old zest for battle was for the time being dead and disillusionment was bitter. "Some of us who are not physically too strong, see our best years sliding away," he wrote. And depression overcame him—"I wish I had strength for more than I do. But I am frequently in pain and seldom very far away from a breakdown. My autumn must be one not of platforms but of rest."[2]

[1] Letter to a friend.
[2] Letter to a friend dated August 18th, 1911.

CHAPTER IV

PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

1911-1914

When Lord Curzon declared that his autumn must be a period of rest, he only meant that he intended to desist from taking any serious part in the particular form of activity which for the time being had become distasteful to him, namely, party politics. Rest in the sense of abstention from definite occupation was no more possible to him now than it had ever been. For him relaxation meant merely the substitution of one form of activity for another—of a pleasurable occupation for one that had become irksome. And no sooner was the Constitutional crisis over than he threw himself with zest into a triangular correspondence with Professor A. A. MacDonell and the Maharaja of Nepal, with the object of securing for the Bodleian Library at Oxford the loan of a number of ancient and valuable Sanskrit manuscripts which were known to repose in the Royal Library at Kathmandu. His efforts were successful, and as a result the originals of seventy rare manuscripts, hitherto buried in the dusty archives of a mountain citadel inaccessible to the scholarship of Europe, were made available to the Sanskrit scholars of the world.

Incidentally in the course of the correspondence, Lord Curzon returned to a subject which he had first taken up when in India as Viceroy, namely, that of the exploration of Mount Everest. He broached the subject with the tact which, in view of his own failure while in India to secure an invitation to pass beyond the fringes of Nepal, he well knew that it demanded. Having informed the

Maharaja that the Royal Geographical Society had decided to pay him the unusual compliment of making him an Honorary Life Fellow, he went on to express a hope that he might some day win the great renown of sanctioning a pioneer party to explore the mountain. His exalted correspondent with equal delicacy declared himself flattered by being thought of in such a connection, but lamented the conservatism of his people which, he feared, was likely to deprive him of the distinction.[1] By way of comment on this correspondence it is only necessary to add that when in 1922 an expedition at length set out to make an attempt to reach the summit of Mount Everest, it was *via* Tibet and not Nepal that it approached the mountain.

On his return from India, Lord Curzon had rejoined the Council of the Royal Geographical Society, and shortly before launching his *ballon d'essai* on the subject of Mount Everest, had become President thereof. Among its Fellows his acceptance of office gave rise to interesting speculation. Nor were they kept long in doubt as to the particular manner in which he proposed to leave his mark upon its fortunes; for when presiding at the annual dinner of the Society on May the 26th, 1911, four days only after his election to the Presidentship, he proceeded to take them into his confidence. The time had surely come, he said, when the Society should acquire a habitation more worthy of its pre-eminent position and better suited to the rapidly expanding scope of its activities. It was intolerable that the volumes of what should be the finest geographical library in the world should be scattered inconveniently in obscure and dismal chambers; its maps crowded in tantalising profusion in a totally inadequate setting and the activities of its members generally hampered by lack of space. And he foreshadowed the early submission to them of a concrete scheme for dealing with these shortcomings.

The idea was not a new one. For twenty years successive Presidents had urged the importance of something being done. In 1909 under the Presidentship of Major Leonard Darwin, matters had reached a stage at which the Society had passed a resolution endorsing the view that a change of habitation was desirable and authoris-

[1] Letter from the Maharaja of Nepal, October 23rd, 1911.

ing the formation of a building fund. But it required Lord Curzon's enthusiasm and driving power to give what had hitherto been little more than a pious aspiration, the chance of emerging into the sphere of what was practicable. When once he had decided to take the matter up, he threw himself with characteristic thoroughness into the work. Not even the anxieties of the Parliamentary crisis were permitted to interrupt him in the prosecution of his self-imposed and laborious task. "I have been away here with the children," he wrote from Broadstairs, at a time when the political world was convulsed with the controversy over the House of Lords, "collecting money for the Geographical Society and writing a book."[1] And within a few weeks of his assumption of the office of President he was remarking casually in a letter to a friend that he had already collected a sum of £22,000.[2] At his bidding money flowed in with astonishing rapidity, and less than a week later he was writing to Ian Malcolm—"You are a Fellow and have not subscribed. Will you? I have raised nearly £25,000."

To what were such remarkable results due? It is impossible to attribute them to anything else than Lord Curzon's own forceful personality. Immeasurable enthusiasm, unshakable determination, an embarrassing lack of diffidence in making clear to all whom he approached precisely what he expected of them, and not least his invariable practice of leaving nothing either to chance or to others, made of him a splendid and extraordinarily successful beggar. "When one takes things up," he wrote in connection with one of his many appeals for funds, "it is usually found that one has to do the whole thing, while other people look on in mute and maddening acquiescence." The reward which crowned his appeal for money for the Victoria Memorial in Calcutta was, perhaps, the most spectacular of his successes. But the qualities which enabled him to bring that tremendous undertaking—involving as I have explained in an earlier chapter an outlay of more than £500,000—to a successful issue, served him to equally good purpose in the many appeals for which he subsequently made himself responsible.

Many examples of successful mendicancy might be given. A typical illustration is provided by the appeal which he issued not

[1] Letter to Mrs. Asquith, afterwards Lady Oxford.
[2] Letter to Lord Lamington, October 13th, 1911.

long after his return from India, with a view to making good an omission to do honour to a great Englishman which he regarded as being in the highest degree discreditable to the English name. Shocked at his discovery that neither in England nor in India was there any public monument to Lord Clive, the first founder of British Empire in Asia, he had, while still in India, caused to be marked out on the site itself, the position of the forces that had been ranged up on the battlefield of Plassey ; and had further commemorated Lord Clive's achievement by an obelisk erected on the spot. But he aimed at something more than a local memorial to a man who loomed so large in the pages of British history, and in the spring of 1907, he sat down to pen an appeal for funds to enable him to have statues of him erected both in London and in Calcutta. He was unaware at the time, of the efforts which had been made by men of Clive's own county, Shropshire, and notably by Colonel H. Southam, then Mayor of Shrewsbury, Sir Offley Wakeman, Chairman of Quarter Sessions and Sir J. Bowen Jones, Chairman of the Salop County Council, from 1902 onwards to have the omission repaired. And when, after issuing his appeal, he heard of the efforts which had already been made, he wrote with characteristic generosity acknowledging their priority in the field and soliciting their support. But it was the case of the Building Fund of the Royal Geographical Society over again ; it required Lord Curzon's prestige and driving force to carry the project to a successful issue.

The glowing words in which he set forth Lord Clive's claims to recognition bore convincing testimony to the depth of his feelings in the matter. Though Clive's life " was passed amid startling vicissitudes of fortune and went out in tempestuous gloom, it was a life of pre-eminent service, of dazzling achievement and of eternal renown. Persecuted and reviled beyond almost any other public servant (except his even greater successor) in a century of the coarsest political passions and the blackest political ingratitude no national celebration followed his melancholy demise. Not in the great temple of reconciliation, but in a humble parish church, unmarked by slab or monument, were laid the remains of the man who at the age of thirty-one planted the foundations of an Empire more enduring than Alexander's, more splendid than Cæsar's . . . "

And if these moving words bear witness to the emotional fires that burned beneath the cold exterior of the man, a few sentences in his handwriting, scribbled across the cover of a copy of the pamphlet in which they were set forth, bear equally striking testimony to the incongruous extremes to which his exuberant nature was constantly betraying him. "Mightn't you do a bit of touting on our behalf?" he wrote, when forwarding the copy to a friend. "No one ever forks out now-a-days without personal solicitation—I might almost say without a pistol." People who were familiar with the rich and picturesque phraseology of his public utterances were often puzzled and not a little shocked at such descents from rhetoric to slang—lapses which when perpetrated by others could be counted on to call forth Lord Curzon's own horrified denunciation: "What is America coming to," he once asked in scandalised astonishment, "when the Chairman of the great dinner to Sir Thomas Lipton at New York addressed the guest of the evening in the following language—'Sir Thomas, you are a corker!'—this evidently being the highest form of compliment?"[1] Those who in the course of conversation with Lord Curzon were suddenly greeted with some excruciating colloquialism or with an explosion of Rabelaisian humour, were apt to ask themselves a similar question. "But surely that's an awful corker!" he exclaimed to an astonished official in India who was explaining to him the grievances of an Indian potentate. "I like to hear a fellow spit it out!" he remarked on another occasion when, at a drawing-room party arranged for his entertainment, he had listened to a somewhat vigorous tenor doing his best with Schumann's "Two Grenadiers."

This, however, is by the way. The moving language of his appeal to his fellow countrymen to wipe out the stain of a century and a half of neglect, was not without effect, and there now stands at the head of the steps by the India Office, overlooking St. James's Park, a noble statue of Clive in bronze, and in the Victoria Memorial Hall in Calcutta a replica of the same statue in white marble; while his name and fame are commemorated in Westminster Abbey by a portrait medallion admirably executed by Mr. John Tweed on the lines of a fine but little known picture by Gainsborough. And so

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon, October 3rd, 1903.

at last, as Lord Curzon himself wrote some years afterwards, Robert Clive took his place "among the silent great ones who yet speak, and will speak for all time from the walls of the metropolitan temple of our race."[1]

The response to Lord Curzon's appeal on behalf of the Royal Geographical Society had been so remarkable that he now felt justified in summoning a special General Meeting of the Society for the purpose of obtaining sanction for the sale of the existing premises. At this meeting held on January the 15th, 1912, he explained that when he had assumed office the Darwin Building Fund aided by legacies amounting to £3,000 had stood at £6,420; but that the new fund, which he had himself inaugurated only eight months before, already amounted to over £31,000, so that the Society had at its disposal a sum of £37,000. And in addition the Government who were as a rule, "more given to taking money from others than to giving it themselves," had been persuaded, provided more commodious premises were acquired, to raise their grant from £500 to £1,250 a year. Authority to sell the premises in Savile Row was given with only one dissentient.

Lord Curzon proceeded with a rapidity which must have disarmed the cynical and confounded the sceptics. By the end of July he had sold the building for a sum appreciably above the reserve placed upon it, and had purchased Lowther Lodge within a stone's throw of the Albert Hall, a building admirably suited to the purposes of the Society, and having in addition two acres of unbuilt on ground "of which," he explained in a circular letter to the Fellows, "it should not be difficult to sell so much as may be required to build for the Society a hall to contain over 1,000 persons in immediate proximity to the house on the east side. We should thus be in a position to secure our own hall for nothing and to solve the problem which has baffled us for half a century and has driven us to accept the hospitality of Burlington House in a theatre the discomforts of which have been a source of constant complaint."[2]

[1] "British Government in India," vol II, p. 145.

[2] Letter dated July 29th, 1912. Owing to circumstances over which Lord Curzon had no control an agreement for the sale of the surplus land, which was reached largely as a result of his own activity but which was never ratified, fell through; and it was not until 1927 that a sale was at last effected.

On April the 14th, 1913, less than two years after his assumption of the Presidentship, Lord Curzon had the satisfaction of seeing the Society installed in its new home.

It was, perhaps, the increased liabilities entailed by this change of habitation, combined with the enhanced accommodation which it provided, that led Lord Curzon to change his mind—a rare event—on a question of no small importance, namely, that of the admission of women to the Fellowship of the Society. "Their contributions to the sources of the Society," he pointed out in the course of his Presidential Address, on May the 26th, 1913, "will add to our power of usefulness in the future."

In sponsoring a change which twenty years before he had opposed and defeated he left nothing to chance. In 1892 his vigorously prosecuted opposition to the proposal had been successful largely owing to the hostility of the Fellows, not to the admission of women *per se*, but to the action of the Council of that day in electing a small number of ladies without prior reference to the Society as a whole. Lord Curzon was careful to run no such risk. On November the 21st, 1912, he issued to all Fellows a circular letter in which the case for reform was stated and carefully argued. Having by referendum obtained a majority of more than three to one in favour of the proposal, he then submitted it to the vote at a special General Meeting held on January the 15th, 1913. He admitted that he had changed his views since he had last been prominently associated with the question; but he emphatically denied any inconsistency on the part of those who supported the admission of women to membership of a scientific body, while continuing to offer unyielding opposition to their political enfranchisement.

> "For in the one case it is the grant of a political right that is in question, a share in the Sovereignty of the country and the Empire. In the other case it is the concession to women of equal intellectual and educational opportunity with men, and a voice, in all probability a very limited voice, in the control of a Society that exists for nothing more formidable or contentious than the advancement of a particular department of human knowledge."

A minority of their Fellows—the actual scientists and explorers among them—he went on to point out, contributed directly to the advancement of geographical knowledge; the majority contributed indirectly to the same cause by providing, in the form of their annual subscriptions, the funds which were necessary to the prosecution of their science. Why, then, should they say that such contributions, essential as they were, should be rejected simply because they happened to be offered by persons of the female sex?

The motion did not escape opposition; but with the ground prepared as carefully as it had been, the result was never in doubt, and of those present at the meeting, 130 voted for it and 51 against.

That Lord Curzon's term of office should have coincided with a great outburst of activity in exploration, resulting among other things in the discovery of the South Pole " and the mingled tragedy and glory of the expedition of Scott and Mawson," was accidental. But Lord Curzon did undoubtedly do much to bring the existence and the work of the Society to the notice of a wider public. He sought with marked success to persuade the most eminent men of the day that patronage of geography was an obligation equally incumbent on the administrator, the philosopher and the statesman; and among the guests who accepted the hospitality of the Society at its annual dinners during his term of office were Cabinet Ministers from the Prime Minister downwards. The increasing share of public interest which was thus attracted to the Society was reflected in the rapid increase in its membership. During his Presidentship the number of Fellows jumped from 4,867 to 5,300, and the Society's income from £14,300 to £16,500.

But most characteristic of all, perhaps, was the personal care which he devoted to the arrangement of the building which he had chosen and purchased for the Society, from the selection of its wall papers, carpets, furniture and ornaments, and the hanging of its pictures, to the choice and acquisition, whether by purchase or by appeal, of additions to its picture gallery and museum. " A persevering correspondence with the families or descendants of famous men has resulted," he said in the course of his last Presidential Address, " in the gift of many relics and objects of high personal value." He added the hope that the practice of collecting such things would be

persevered with and that the Society would be able to show in unbroken sequence memorials of all those who had won renown in the field of geography. The portrait of Lord Curzon himself by Sargent, which now hangs over the mantelpiece in the Council Room, stands alike as a memorial of his services to the cause of geography and as a token of appreciation on the part of those whose affairs he directed with such success, unique in the annals of the Society.

His interest in the affairs of the institution did not cease with his relinquishment of office. He had obtained from the late Lord Glenconner a gift of £500 for the adornment of the Society's new home, and constant attendance at Christie's enabled him to make valuable additions to its collection of furniture and pictures.

The collection of works of art both for himself and for public institutions was a hobby from which he derived immense delight. When in London he was a regular visitor at Christie's, so much so that in the spring of 1910 he was called as a witness for the defence in a law suit brought against Messrs. Christie in connection with their preparation of a catalogue dealing with a sale of china. And of all the institutions in which he was interested, none benefited more from his pursuit of this hobby than the Victoria Memorial Hall in Calcutta. From the time when he first propounded his scheme to the Indian public to the day of his death, he never wearied of his quest after objects of historic or artistic interest for the collection which he had always intended that the building should house. I was not in the least surprised when I was told by Mr. Clement Jones, who served as secretary of the Shipping Control Committee which was set up in 1916 to cope with the grave position which had arisen owing to shortage of tonnage, that as Chairman of the Committee Lord Curzon appeared to take as much personal interest in arranging for the conveyance of some marble from Italy for some purpose connected with the Victoria Memorial Hall in Calcutta, as he did in dealing with a communication of the highest importance from the Foreign Office, touching on the whole question of the shipping requirements of the Allies. Many of the exhibits which it now possesses came to it by gift or by bequest at Lord Curzon's personal solicitation; others were purchased by him

from time to time on behalf of the Trustees. No opportunity of adding to the collection was ever lost. "By the way," he wrote, when inviting Sir Rennell Rodd to visit him in India, "would not some memento of your grandfather, the famous Rennell, be very appropriate for our Indian Valhalla, the Victoria Memorial Hall? Have you or your family anything that you would like to give?"[1] If he had drawn his bow at a venture he had not done so in vain, as witness a letter to the same correspondent four months later—"Yes, I will hold you to the bronze bust of old Rennell. We shall be most grateful for it. The other day I was wandering about in Bengal with a map of his in my hand."[2] How many other articles—miniatures, manuscripts, pictures, prints—now reposing beneath the marble domes of the shimmering white building at the southern end of the Calcutta Maidan, were not obtained as a result of similar displays of personal solicitude? The Report of the Trustees of the Victoria Memorial Hall for the year 1925 lies before me as I write. Therein it is stated that without Lord Curzon's "incessant interest and personal labour after he ceased to be Viceroy, the collection would never have been brought together." He retained his interest in it to the end, and on his death bequeathed to it a three-quarter length portrait of Major-General Stringer Lawrence, by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

Lord Curzon's qualifications for Trusteeship of the Art Treasures of the nation were too obvious to be overlooked; and, on the death of Lord Carlisle in the spring of 1911, he was appointed a Trustee of the National Gallery in his place. Few Trustees can have taken a more conscientious view of their duties than he did. Before he had been many months on the Board, his colleagues were given a taste of his reforming zeal. In November he moved for, and secured the appointment of, a Committee to enquire into the retention of important pictures in this country and other matters connected with the National Art Collections. The Committee under his chairmanship held a number of meetings to consider the general principles underlying the subject and the procedure to be adopted in its investigation; and it was not until the autumn of 1912 that they

[1] Letter dated November 22nd, 1901.
[2] Letter dated March 20th, 1902.

were prepared to begin the examination of the witnesses whom they decided to invite to give evidence before them. Throughout the autumn and winter the process of examining witnesses proceeded, and towards the end of 1913, the Committee, after digesting the great mass of material which had been collected for their use, presented their Report to the Board of Trustees. Lord Curzon left nothing to chance. He wrote the Report covering 149 foolscap sheets of paper with his own hand, and he was successful in carrying the Trustees with him at a series of meetings held specially for the purpose of considering the recommendations made. And having secured the concurrence of the Board, he proceeded characteristically to write the long covering letter which reached the Treasury over the signature of the secretary, commending to the favourable consideration of the Government the recommendations of the Report which required their co-operation or assent. His labours were not even then completed. Between the submission of the Report to the Treasury in March 1914, and its presentation to Parliament a year later, he was involved in an exacting correspondence over a difference of opinion which had arisen between the members of the Committee on a question of the highest importance, but one which Lord Curzon held to be outside the terms of reference, namely, that of the relations of the Director of the National Gallery to the Trustees. And there is little doubt that but for the time and energy which he devoted to pressing his view, the brief note attached to Mr. Benson's signature to the Report, indicating that it was appended subject to dissent on this point, would have been replaced by a Minute arguing the case for a fundamental change in the powers of the Director and in the practice under which purchases were made by the Board of Trustees as a whole.

The story of the appointment of the Committee and of its subsequent labours is of interest, as showing the enthusiasm with which Lord Curzon took up any work of the kind which was entrusted to him. The value of such service rendered ungrudgingly to the Nation was fully appreciated by the Government; and when, thirteen years later, in 1924, the Government of that day decided to appoint a Fine Arts Commission to whom they and other authorities of standing might turn for advice on such matters as the

location of statues and monuments in public places, whether in London or the provinces, the selection of models for such works, questions of town planning and of landscape gardening in public parks, the Prime Minister turned instinctively to him as being peculiarly well qualified to direct the activities of the new body. Though for various reasons Lord Curzon was unwilling to accept the chairmanship, he served as a member of the Commission under Lord Crawford till his death.

CHAPTER V

ARCHITECTURE AND SOME OTHER THINGS

THE ever expanding range of Lord Curzon's intellectual and artistic interests is testified to by the extent of his association, whether in a working or an honorary capacity, with learned societies, and by the number of honorary titles which he held. Besides being Chancellor of one University and for some years Lord Rector of another, he had at one time or another been a Fellow of All Souls College and an Honorary Fellow of Balliol, Romanes Lecturer at Oxford and Rede Lecturer at Cambridge; and had been the recipient of the Honorary Degrees of no less than five English and Scottish universities. He was a Fellow of the Royal Society, and in addition to being a Trustee of the National Gallery and a member of the Fine Arts Commission, President and subsequently Trustee of the Royal Geographical Society, he was a Fellow of the British Academy, a Trustee of the British Museum and an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

Though his possession of this last distinction was not widely known, it was by no means without significance. The list of Honorary Fellows of the Institute is a small and very select one. It seldom contains more than ten names. The honour, consequently, is a rare one. It was conferred upon Lord Curzon in 1904 as a token of appreciation of the interest in architecture which he had displayed throughout the term of his Viceroyalty, both by his work of preservation and restoration and by his creation of a staff of Government architects with a view to raising the level of public architecture throughout the continent. But it was also given in recognition of the fact that it was in connection with architecture, of which he

had considerable practical as well as theoretical knowledge, that his artistic impulses found at once their most striking and their most characteristic expression. He had an eye for line and colour and an appreciation of a good moulding combined with a practical knowledge of structural detail quite unusual in a layman. And he often said that if politics had not claimed him he believed that he would have succeeded as an architect. Yet what gave to his interest in architecture its special character was neither his technical knowledge nor his aesthetic judgment, but his point of view.

That is not to say that Lord Curzon did not appreciate to the full the utilitarian qualities of a building. With his severely practical mind it would have been surprising if he had not done so. And when during the closing months of his life he devoted so much time and thought to altering Kedleston, he insisted upon the complete modernisation of the famous Adam building, entering as usual into the minutest details himself. There were to be fifteen bathrooms, lifts, a billiard room and an elaborate system of telephones. This last item was one of no small importance, as may be seen from the following correspondence.

> " Don't please ring me up unless for something important," he wrote from Kedleston to his private secretary in London, one day in September 1920. " This house is as large as Windsor Castle. I was busy at the other end of it when I was told you required me on the telephone. It took me two minutes or more to get there, six or seven minutes to get on to you, only to learn that as I was not coming up, you proposed to send me a pouch."

Sir George Cunningham had merely telephoned his message from the Foreign Office in the expectation that it would be taken by a servant, and had little dreamed that it would involve the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in an unnecessary walk downstairs and along passages, still less in a holograph letter of explanation and expostulation.

And if Lord Curzon was keenly alive to this aspect of a building, he was still more sensitive to the artistic qualities of an architect's

work. No one who recalls his comments on the monuments of Greece and Egypt, or his descriptions of the Taj and other Indian buildings, which have been recorded in earlier chapters of these volumes, will need to be apprised of that.

Appreciation of the practical convenience or of the artistic merits of a building is, however, common enough. What particularly distinguished Lord Curzon's attitude towards architecture was his perception in the case of buildings of any age, of another and much more subtle quality. " A house," he declared, " has to my mind a history as enthralling as that of an individual. If an old house it has a much longer existence, and it may be," he added, with a touch of cynicism, " both beautiful and romantic, which an individual seldom is." Therein is to be found the key to his peculiar point of view—he invested buildings with an almost human personality of their own, so that when he contemplated some ancient castle or mansion, it was much more than the stones and mortar that met his gaze ; more even than a thing of beauty or of grandeur. What he saw was a thing with a distinctive individuality of its own whose life story he instinctively passed in review as he gazed at it, picturing its growth from youth to adolescence, and from adolescence to old age ; its changing aspect under the creative hands of its successive occupants ; and conjuring up the scenes of which it had been a mute but interested witness.

And he delighted to immerse himself in the atmosphere which such an edifice exhaled. His interest in ancient buildings was, in fact, derived, in part at least, from that passion for reconstructing the past upon which stress had been laid in earlier pages of this narrative. " In the case of a great family mansion which has passed from one scion to another of an ancient stock," he wrote on one occasion, " the house becomes an epitome of the family history and is the outward and material symbol of its continuity."[1] But beautiful and ancient buildings which recalled the life and customs of the past were, in his view, something even more than historical documents of supreme value, they were a part of the spiritual and æsthetic heritage of a nation imbuing it with reverence and educating its taste. And it was this conviction that led him to purchase

[1] " British Government in India," Vol. I.

and eventually to bequeath to the State, two famous examples of the architecture of different periods of English history.[1]

There was in this the dying gesture of a proud patrician to the people, a fine reminder of his unquestioning acceptance of the obligations attaching to rank. And as one reads those passages of his Will in which he set forth his wishes concerning these princely offerings to the nation, and more particularly his desire that grounds and buildings should be open for all time for the enjoyment of the public, there rises almost inevitably before one's gaze the dramatic scene which accompanied the reading of another famous Will. Had Lord Curzon himself, perhaps, as he penned his carefully thought-out instructions to his Executors, a fleeting glimpse of the Forum of ancient Rome; of the noisy and excited crowd as they hearkened to the persuasive eloquence of Mark Antony; of the effect produced on them as they learned of Julius Cæsar's thought for them—his walks and private arbours and new planted orchards left to them:

> "And to their heirs for ever; common pleasures,
> To walk abroad and recreate themselves?"[2]

The story of his acquisition of Tattershall Castle in Lincolnshire reads like a romance. Public attention had been attracted to the ruin by the rumoured removal from it in 1911 of its four famous mantelpieces dating back to the first half of the 15th century, reputed the finest in the United Kingdom and known to be the models which Pugin had taken for the fireplaces which he designed for the Houses of Parliament. Further publicity had been given to the matter by the public-spirited action of a neighbouring resident, Sir Frances Trippel, in offering, if the National Trust would step in to save the castle and its fireplaces, to advance the money required up to a sum of £5,000 without interest, the anonymous purchaser of the latter having made it known that he would stay his hand if a sum of £2,800 were forthcoming within the next forty-eight hours. For various reasons the Trust declined to act. The fireplaces were accordingly removed and the castle itself became the subject

[1] See Lord Curzon's Will, dated March 8th, 1925.
[2] See Shakespeare's "Julius Cæsar," Act III, Scene 2.

BODIAM CASTLE
Bequeathed by Lord Curzon to the nation

of disquieting rumour, it being widely put about—by interested parties as it afterwards turned out—that the building was to be taken down brick by brick and shipped across the Atlantic.

It was at this juncture that Lord Curzon came upon the scene. He acted with characteristic promptitude. He ran down to Lincoln one November morning, saw the building, and by five o'clock the same afternoon had purchased it by telegram. "I had less than twenty-four hours to do it in," he remarked. Six months later the famous fireplaces were discovered in a store in Bloomsbury, ready packed for shipment to America, and with the generous co-operation of Captain, afterwards Sir, Archibald Weigall, M.P., and other friends, were recovered and restored to their original setting.

His other gift to the nation lay in a different quarter, away in a fold of the Sussex hills where they sweep down to the valley of the Rother. It was, perhaps, because there was no trace of the modern world to mar its ancient and solitary beauty that Bodiam Castle, when his eyes first lit upon it, made so immediate and profound an appeal to Lord Curzon. So potent was the atmosphere that hung over it, that he would have felt little surprise—so he declared in his account of it—had a train of richly clad knights, falcons on their wrists and their ladies mounted on gaily caparisoned palfreys, emerged suddenly from its Barbican Gate. All who are familiar with the sumptuous and erudite volume in which Lord Curzon has traced with his own hand the history of the building and painted a picture of its architectural features,[1] will appreciate the immense amount of labour and research which went to its compilation. Yet incredible though it may seem, the material for the history of Bodiam Castle was collected, and the story itself written, concurrently with those of five—or, if we place in this category the elaborate work on Government House, Calcutta, published in 1925 under the title of "British Government in India," six—other buildings; a task which occupied him at intervals throughout the remainder of his life.

In his pursuit of the life story of these various buildings—Calcutta, Walmer, Hackwood, Tattershall, Bodiam, Montacute and Kedleston—he delved deep into the archives of the Record Office, the British

[1] "Bodiam Castle," published posthumously.

Museum and other institutions ; and he perused with unexampled patience and pertinacity page after page of musty parchment on which might be recorded some transaction calculated to throw light on the matter under investigation. " Search must be made," he explained, " in Patent Rolls, Close Rolls, Pipe Rolls, Charter Rolls, Parliamentary Rolls, Inquisitions, Visitations, in the published State Papers, and in any documentary source that tells of the grant or inheritance of lands, the proceedings of Law Courts or of Parliaments, or the gifts and awards of Kings." [1]

To tell in any detail the story of this absorbing quest which had for its goal the production not of a volume, but of a whole series of volumes to be called " The British Mansions Series," would require a book in itself. All that is possible here is to indicate briefly the systematic way in which Lord Curzon set about a task which to him was a hobby and recreation, but which to many men might have sufficed for a life's work.

The story of Bodiam Castle has been the first of six volumes on English houses which he planned, to be given to the world ; but it was not the first that he took in hand. His brief occupancy of Walmer Castle in the summer of 1904 had fired him with the ambition of unravelling its past history and piecing together a consecutive story of its Lord Wardens, from Lionel Sackville, Duke of Dorset, who was " the first Lord Warden who is supposed to have resided here and to have built the room in which I am now writing," [2] up to the present day. And the unhappy associations of his own tenure of the office did nothing to damp his ardour for research into the history of its past. His idea, as set forth in a letter to Mr. Barwick, was to amass and collate all the available material, and from it " to frame a private and unpublished history of the inner life of the castle and the changes through which it has passed." [3] And some time later he explained in greater detail the nature of his aim :

" What I am looking for especially, is the personal aspect of

[1] " Bodiam Castle," p.14.

[2] Letter to Mr. G. F. Barwick, Keeper of Printed Books, British Museum, September 1st, 1904.

[3] Letter dated September 1st, 1904.

> the life at Walmer, of the Lord Wardens, their letters from there about the place, the mention of alterations in its structure or appearance, allusions to it in the correspondence of eminent men, incidents that happened there, details about the property attached to the castle or the life and local occupations of the Lord Wardens."[1]

His labour has not been lost. After his death the material which he amassed and the notes which he made together with the manuscript which he had completed, covering the ground up to the death of Lord Liverpool, were entrusted to the competent hands of Mr. Stephen Gwynn ; and in the autumn of 1927 the story of Walmer Castle and of the Lord Wardens, planned and more than half written by Lord Curzon and completed from his notes by Mr. Gwynn, was made available to the reading public.

Shortly after his return from India Lord Curzon took Hackwood House near Basingstoke, the property of Lord Bolton, and was soon engaged in studying its past.

> "I am looking into the history of this place, which was a famous house inhabited for a century, 1690-1790, by the seven Dukes of Bolton," he wrote, "and since then by the four Lords Bolton. There is a tradition that Capability Brown, whose chief work was done between 1760 and 1780, came here and remodelled the grounds and gardens, and it may well have been so. But we have no definite record. Have you any reference in the Museum to a Life of Brown fuller than that in the Dictionary of National Biography, from which I could derive accurate information? There must somewhere be a record of his work."[2]

A reply to the effect that some at least of the records that Lord Curzon would like to have perused were no longer to be had evoked a sigh of regret—"What a pity it is that records that might so easily be kept, so easily disappear, submerged in private libraries, lost or destroyed."[3]

[1] Letter dated July 25th, 1905.
[2] Letter to Mr. G. F. Barwick, April 18th, 1910.
[3] *Ibid.*, April 21st, 1910.

It was not enough for Lord Curzon that he should piece together the history of the buildings in which he took an interest, difficult and laborious though that task often proved to be. He must also play his own part in the life story of the houses themselves. The zeal with which he planned and carried through his great programme of preservation and restoration of ancient buildings in India, was scarcely more remarkable than the enthusiasm with which, after his return to England, he worked for the preservation and restoration of historic buildings in the English country side. For while in one case he had behind him the financial resources of the State and the professional and administrative assistance of a Government Department, in the other he had to rely on his own unaided effort. It was a positive pain to him to see a building of a particular period losing its character—personality he would have preferred to call it—through ignorance, indifference or neglect from whatever cause arising. And it can only have been a desire to ensure the preservation of the building in keeping with its own distinctive period that caused him in 1914 when heir to Kedleston and in actual occupation of Hackwood House, to take a lease of yet another mansion, which he regarded as being by far the most beautiful house of middle size in England. Once in his possession, Montacute House in Somersetshire underwent complete restoration and was re-furnished from floor to roof.

His interest in the subject was extraordinary, and when Mr. W. H. Helm wrote his book "Homes of the Past," in which he gave a sketch of domestic buildings and life in England from the Norman to the Georgian age, accompanied by a proposal for preserving certain typical houses, each to be furnished as an example of its own time, Lord Curzon not only applauded the proposal but read through the proofs and supplied additional information on little known details of early English life. "I think that your idea of the historical homes is a very good one," he wrote in October 1919, "and before I die I shall have contributed two and possibly three." And after the publication of the book:

> "I received with great pleasure the copy of your excellent book and noticed the interesting interpolation"—this refer-

ring to the information which he had himself supplied—" on baths. As you, I think, point out, they used to bathe together in great tubs in the open air and ablutions were nearly as common as now. . . . The absence of nightgowns or sleeping suits is another feature of domestic existence much in evidence in the stories and wood cuts."[1]

Lord Curzon viewed with dismay the indifference of the age to the sweeping changes which were despoiling England of much that was beautiful and characteristic of her past, both in the great centres of population and in the quiet country side. " One of the glories of the English country is the English village, and the main glory of the English village is the picturesque and smiling cottage in which the English peasant and his forefathers have been wont to dwell," he wrote in a despairing effort to call attention to one at least of the evils which followed in the train of the utilitarian spirit of the day.

" It would be a national tragedy if in the building or rebuilding of labourers' cottages that is likely to follow any systematic attempt made by the Legislature to improve the conditions of agricultural life, these old buildings were to be replaced by a new type of standardised cottage, dumped down either singly—or still worse—in rows like a lot of band boxes, or canisters, or dog kennels, or whatever may be the parallel suggested by the precise degree of monotony and monstrosity presented in their construction. It is doubtful whether the labourer would be more comfortable—he certainly would not be happier—and a cruel injury would be done to the beauty of the countryside."[2]

The appeal was not without effect; for in the following summer a large number of models and designs of country cottages, embodying the characteristic architectural features of almost every county in England, were sent in by architects from all over the country as exhibits in a competition which was organised in response to it.

[1]Letter dated August 3rd, 1921.
[2]Letter to *Country Life*, October 18th, 1913.

In the meantime Lord Curzon had made an equally impassioned appeal for funds for the preservation, if not of old London itself—for he realised that that was scarcely possible—at least of records, maps and descriptions of it before it had wholly perished and been forgotten. London, he urged the public to remember, was not merely a vast and purposeless aggregation of human beings; it was also a great historical monument, a unique and wonderful treasure-house of the past. "It is a place that has exercised a powerful influence upon the life and growth of the nation; and correspondingly the history of our people has written itself in indelible characters, sometimes in savage scars, upon its face."[1]

Where he was in a position to do so, as in the case, for example, of houses which he himself owned or rented, he gave lavishly both thought and money to the work of restoring to the buildings or their surroundings features which had been lost to them through the carelessness of individuals or the ravages of time. At Hackwood he traced dimly in the undergrowth of the famous Spring Wood, with its giant cedars, beeches and spruces soaring a hundred feet and more into the air, the outline of an ancient cockpit. His curiosity was at once aroused. What had it been like when in use? Had the floor been of soil, or sand, or turf? Would the banks of the arena have been furnished with wooden tiers or grassy steps? Prints of covered-in cockpits by Hogarth and others were extant; but pictures of open air cockpits he had not come across. Did such exist? He turned not for the first time to the Keeper of Printed Books at the British Museum—"Once again I wish your kind assistance. I am thinking of restoring an open air cockpit—probably the only one left in England. . . ." His quest was evidently successful, for the cockpit may be seen to-day, a hollow grass-sown cup with sloping bank surrounded by a row of yews and with a flight of steps leading down to the floor of the arena.

In his constant search for, and occasional acquisition of, historic monuments and works of art, Lord Curzon had more than once been brought into sharp collision with persons who trafficked in such things, not so much for love of art as with the hope of profit.

[1]Speech at a General Meeting of the Committee for the survey of the memorials of Greater London, December 14th, 1913.

His knowledge gained at Tattershall, of the means employed for the purpose of raising prices, was added to not long afterwards, in the course of an attempt which he made to preserve in its original setting an historic room known as the Globe room, of the Reindeer Inn at Banbury—" that beautiful specimen," as he described it, " of untouched and unspoiled Jacobean work, equally remarkable for its dark panelled walls, its fine mullioned window and its exquisite plastered ceiling which has for three centuries been the pride of the provincial town."[1] His efforts were unavailing, the room, purchased for a sum believed to be in the neighbourhood of £1,000, was removed and set up in the premises of a dealer in London, by whom it was intimated that it could be bought, the price mentioned being £4,500. On entering into negotiations, Lord Curzon was informed that the room had in the meantime been disposed of though, as in the case of Tattershall, the name of the purchaser was withheld.

> " There," he explained in a letter to *The Times* in which the story of his attempt was set forth, " the matter rests. Whether the Globe room has passed into the hands of some unknown but public spirited benefactor, acting in the interests of the public, or whether it has been made the subject of an arrangement designed to extricate those who are involved from an uncomfortable position, or whether it has entered upon one more phase of its career of unabashed profit hunting, or whether it is fated to disappear from our shores and to turn up in a Transatlantic mansion or a Continental museum, we have no means of ascertaining. We call attention to the matter to show what are the proceedings at Banbury as at Tattershall which those who would fain save the antiquities of our country from vandal hands have to cope with, and how rapacious are the instincts which will tear out panelling and mantelpieces from their ancient surroundings in order to make a dealer's profit out of what should be a nation's glory."[2]

Such experiences were unfortunate. They encouraged the suspicion always latent in Lord Curzon's mind, that persons with whom

[1] *The Times* of August 1st, 1912. [2] *Ibid.*

he transacted business were in the main concerned to get the better of him. They brought to the surface, consequently, a trait in his character which was curiously at variance with his habitually spacious outlook upon life. Despising and condemning meanness in the widest sense in which that term is used—and more particularly meanness of character and pettiness of mind—he nevertheless displayed an almost huckstering spirit in business matters; and while condemning rapacity in others, he openly gloried in getting the better of a bargain. A shrewd appreciation of values derived from the struggles of those early days when, aided by his own exertions, he had with difficulty made the two ends of an exiguous income meet; a certain pride in the possession of knowledge of the kind; an intense dislike of being done—since to be worsted predicated obvious inefficiency—all these led him to drive hard bargains and made of him a man with whom to do business was seldom easy and sometimes far from pleasant.

He himself used to tell with obvious delight an amusing story of the way in which, on one occasion, he foiled the rapacity with which he invariably credited all dealers in works of art. There was advertised for sale at Christie's a particularly fine red lacquer cabinet for which he had determined to bid. On the day of the sale he was detained at an important meeting and on reaching the sale room learned, to his annoyance, that the lot had already passed under the hammer. Ascertaining the price and the name of the dealer from the provinces to whom the cabinet had been knocked down, he journeyed to his establishment, where the following conversation took place :—

Lord Curzon : "I should think Mr. So-and-so, that they will be making you a peer before long."

The dealer : "Why do you say that, my Lord ?"

Lord Curzon : "Oh, because of your well-known political views, to say nothing of the immense profits which you must make on the works of art in which you deal."

The dealer : "I assure you, my Lord, that I never look for a profit of more than 10 per cent. on anything that I buy."

Lord Curzon : "Is that so ? Then I will give you 10 per cent. on that lacquer cabinet which you have recently purchased."

The dealer though manifestly disconcerted had no choice but to agree. And the cabinet may be seen to-day at the foot of the staircase in Lord Curzon's home in Carlton House Terrace.

Lord Curzon's suspicions were not confined to dealers in works of art. He started with the assumption that all contractors were his enemies. His dealings with them took the form, consequently, of an odd kind of warfare in which he usually—though not always—came off the victor. His strategy was simple, his preference being for a direct frontal attack. He merely knocked off from their accounts the amount which he regarded as constituting the excess over a reasonable profit. This procedure did not always pass without challenge. A firm which he had treated in this way wrote back to him on one occasion in terms which caused him acute anguish for many days afterwards.

When towards the end of his life he began the work which he had long planned at Kedleston, he sought an architect upon whose services he should have first call, and in Mr. A. S. G. Butler he found a man who was prepared to throw himself heart and soul into the task in prospect. The Agreement between them was drawn up much in the form of a Convention between the Governments of two Powers and with all the care that, as Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon would have devoted to the drafting of such a document. Even the quality of the meals to which the architect would be entitled in the owner's absence was exactly stipulated.

In all these transactions it was the reputation for shrewdness which he valued, and not the savings which he effected; for he spent money lavishly and without the smallest tinge of regret provided that the return which he obtained for his outlay was satisfactory. At Hackwood, which he held on a comparatively short lease only, he spent thousands of pounds on improvements, going so far as to have a mound of solid chalk rising at its greatest point to a height of from twelve to fourteen feet above the surrounding level, which interrupted to some extent the view over the park from the ground floor windows, bodily removed. Yet he would write pages in his own hand, disputing over the most trifling outlays which he considered should be made by the landlord rather than by the tenant. A somewhat cold reception accorded by the

landlord's agent to a suggestion which he made shortly after the outbreak of war in 1914, that the estate should supply the material required for the repair of a pond which he wished to undertake, called forth a typical reply—" Really isn't it rather shabby haggling over the petty contributions I ask you to make? . . . I am sometimes almost stupefied at the meanness of the whole thing, the tenant spending thousands on beautifying another man's place, the latter's agent huckstering over a few pounds."

Similarly the somewhat frequent appeals for funds to meet church expenses at once conjured up visions of inefficient management.

> " It seems to me quite wrong that Mr. A. should have these incessant church expenses collections. On each of the three occasions on which I have been present in the last six weeks there has been such a collection. There is not a church in England where there is such an incessant demand for this object. Once a month or twice a quarter ought to be quite enough . . . I have often given £1 to a church expenses collection here. But I will not do this if on every occasion when I enter the church I feel I am forcibly to be dunned for the same object."

A steady rise in the rates was responsible for a prodigious correspondence. Detailed figures showing the increase in certain rates from £86 4s. 10d. in 1908 to £117 9s. 9d. in 1914, were laboriously set out and communicated to the agent for his inspection—"Is there to be no stop to this progressive increase?" Lord Curzon asked. An appeal was suggested; but the suggestion met with little favour.

> " I think you have forgotten that exactly two years ago I spent £20 in a futile appeal against the enhanced assessment of this house. I regard the assessment of this house and estate as scandalous. But my experience two years ago was that I can get no justice from the Assessment Committee. What, therefore, is the good of my appealing again? Do you wish to join me in such an appeal? Two years ago you left me to

bear the entire burden whereas it seems to me that we are equally concerned."

The question of repairs was a constant source of controversy. "The roof of coal shed which I have frequently advised you either to repair or to take down since it is a part of your obligation, has now fallen in as I always told you it would." It was all a question whether under the clause of the lease by which the landlord bound himself to keep the main walls and roof of the mansion house in order, he was bound to keep in similar repair all adjacent buildings. Lord Curzon thought he was—"It was precisely the point that you name about which I took legal advice, viz., that the roof of the mansion carries with it the contiguous buildings. . . . The coal shed has been in a state of dilapidation ever since I came here and I have not the slightest intention of repairing it. If the landlord chooses to dispute his liability I have nothing to say to that; I merely suggest in your own interest that you should save what slates you can while there is time."

The exacting and litigious spirit in which he approached all such matters did sometimes end by landing him in the law courts. "Can you name a competent solicitor to me in Basingstoke," he enquired one Sunday morning, "to represent me in a rather troublesome case with a horse-dealer in the County Court?" A recommendation was duly made; but the nominee had already been briefed by the opposing party and Lord Curzon tried again—"I wrote to Mr. A. only to hear that he is appearing for X. in the case about the horse. As I mentioned to you Mr. B. cannot appear for me because he is Registrar of the Court. I would rather not employ Mr. C. because of the very rude letters that he wrote to me when he represented Y. in the —case. I have never had such letters from a solicitor . . . "

And if it was distrust of the intentions of other people that led him to approach all business matters in an aggressive and unaccommodating spirit, it was similarly distrust of the ability of anyone else to do justice to his case that was the cause of his rooted aversion to delegate work of any kind to others. One day not long before his departure from England to take up his appointment as Viceroy of India, he was surprised by a friend hurrying from room to room

in his house in London, his shirt sleeves rolled up, a pencil and a sheaf of paper in his hands. He was making an inventory of his furniture before leaving. His view of the utility of a secretary was well illustrated by a casual remark in a letter to Ian Malcolm, who had promised to look out for a suitable person for him—"I am so busy with *Frontiers*"—the Romanes Lecture which he was preparing to deliver—"and Oxford that I have carted secretary for the moment; but will take advantage of your good nature later."[1]

He insisted on the smallest detail of estate management being submitted to him in person and complained bitterly if this was not done. "If, as I am informed, it is the case that you have invited people to play on the golf course in Hackwood Park"—though Lord Curzon had the shooting he did not rent the Park—"without reference to me, I must say that this is a procedure which I have every right to resent. I am willing enough to let people use it, but at least I expect to issue the invitations myself."[2] A small alteration to the water-works done without prior consultation with him elicited a similar rebuke—"The water-works arrangement seems to me rather faulty. I never hear anything about it until I get the bill. Clearly as I have to pay two thirds I ought to know what is going on."

Yet he sometimes professed indignation at being troubled unnecessarily. "It is rather hard in all my overwhelming work to be bothered by you with these complaints about rabbits," he wrote on June the 8th, 1921. "Your letter cost me six letters or perhaps twenty minutes of time which I cannot afford and now you trouble me again. Do for Heavens sake write to A. though he is the subtenant." A week later—"It would have been so easy for you to relieve me by writing your complaints to A. instead of taking the pedantic line of bothering me. I often wonder why it gives you so much pleasure to avoid the courtesies of life." And on July the 13th: "I am astonished that instead of plaguing me with these letters you do not take the simple and, I should have thought, obvious course of writing to A. himself. However you seem bent on causing me as much annoyance as you can, and you certainly succeed."

[1] Letter dated October 18th, 1907.
[2] Letter to the Agent, 20th April, 1913.

These traits in a man of Lord Curzon's breadth of vision are amazing. Taken by themselves they give an altogether false impression of his character. *Prima facie* they suggest a meanness from which Lord Curzon would himself have recoiled in horror. Of course he never saw them in this light. He saw in them a perfectly natural display of a very proper business capacity which far from being reprehensible was wholly meritorious. He consequently added to his offence in the eyes of those who did not see matters precisely as he did, by glorying in them. His many acts of private generosity he kept to himself. His gifts to the community—both in India and in Great Britain—were, of course, well known ; though few were aware, perhaps, that the reason why he kept Bodiam Castle in his own hands during his lifetime was that he was prepared to spend more money on its upkeep than he thought that any public department would feel justified in doing. He confided to a correspondent who, being unaware of his intentions, had enquired tentatively whether he would be willing to part with it, that he had already spent nearly £5,000 on its restoration, and that until it passed on his death to the nation, he proposed to continue spending on it all that was required to keep it in a proper state of preservation.[1]

Another example of his indifference to money as such is provided by his action in 1915 in repaying to the Treasury sums amounting to between £600 and £700 which had been paid to him in respect of his salary as a member of the Cabinet. His explanation was given in a letter to the Prime Minister :

> " At a time when the Government is preaching and ought, therefore, to be practising economy, I do not like the feeling of drawing a salary so greatly in excess either of my own deserts or of the work which I am called upon to perform as that which I now receive . . . I ask your permission to serve the State so long as I have the honour to be a member of your Government holding only a nominal office (that of Lord Privy Seal) in an unpaid capacity."[2]

That he had refused payment for his services which, though he held charge of no administrative Department, were sufficiently

[1] Letter to Major B. Baden Powell, October 19th, 1921.
[2] Letter dated August 5th, 1915.

arduous, became known at the time. But how many even among his closest friends were aware of his many acts of private generosity and kindliness? Of the banking account of a friend of his youth guaranteed? Of the financial aid rendered to a writer fallen on evil days, whose works he happened to admire? Of the gift to a humble Indian Servant in far away Madras, a man quite unknown to him, but one whose gallant deed in trying to save an Englishman in danger, long after he had himself left India, had come to his notice through the columns of an Indian newspaper?[1]

Nothing, indeed, has been more striking than the number of letters which I have received during the past two years from persons in every stratum of society testifying to Lord Curzon's instinctive generosity and kindliness of heart. Somewhere in this country there is—or was—a young man bearing the name, George Curzon Crabb. He is the owner of a treasured silver christening cup, the gift of his godfather. It was mere chance combined with a thoughtful impulse on the part of a passing traveller that dowered him with so eminent a godparent. He happened to be the infant son of a country chemist to whose shop Lord Curzon was taken for a bandage when he met with a motor accident in 1908. Nor did Lord Curzon's innate generosity stop short at the bestowal of mere material gifts. His interest once aroused, he would spare no pains to assist a fellow worker. Like the author of "Ozias Humphry" and "John Zoffany,"[2] many speak in terms of the warmest gratitude of laborious aid ungrudgingly rendered to them. These are but a few examples taken at random. But it is in these and such as these, rather than in the extravagant economies of an intelligible idiosyncrasy, that is to be found a key to the real character of the man.

[1]The occasion was the assassination of Mr. H. O. D. Harding, District Court Judge, at Trichinopoly in December 1915. The Court Daffadar, an old man of over fifty, grappled with the assassin and was badly wounded. The story was told by Mr. E. L. Thornton, a former judge of the district, in a letter to the *Statesman* of Calcutta, in which he asked for funds to purchase the Daffadar a plot of land. It was this letter which in the midst of his exacting labours in 1916 caught Lord Curzon's eye and moved him to send a contribution to the fund.

[2]Dr. G. C. Williamson, D.Litt., who tells me that in spite of the overwhelming burden which Lord Curzon was carrying at the time—the books in question were published in 1918 and 1920 respectively—he devoted an immense amount of time and trouble towards obtaining for him certain material of which he was in need.

CHAPTER VI

CHANCELLOR OF OXFORD UNIVERSITY

1907-1925

by

SIR HERBERT WARREN, K.C.V.O.
Vice-Chancellor of the University, 1906-1910

Vice, that is by turns—
O'er pale faces mourns,
The black-tassell'd trencher and common hat;
The Chantry-boy sings,
The Steeple-bell rings.
And as for the Chancellor—*dominat*.

Keats, "On Oxford, A Parody," written during his stay in Magdalen Hall, September, 1817.

THE gifted artist, Philip de László, painter of the masterly portrait of Lord Curzon which hangs in the Hall of All Souls College, tells an interesting story about it. "When I began upon it," he relates, "I said to Lord Curzon, the first thing you must do is to forget that you were ever Viceroy of India. I am going to paint you as something far greater, as *le grand penseur*, the Chancellor of the University of Oxford." What Lord Curzon replied he does not say. But if not greater than the Viceroyalty, the Chancellorship was also 'great.' Lord Curzon gave himself to either with his whole being, with all his unwearying ambitious industry, eager to make the most of either office, to set his mark alike on India and on Oxford, to leave each better than he found it.

Largely for this very reason he was not, during the process, popular. He was an exacting chief, but if he taxed and tired his helpers in Oxford as elsewhere it was not so ruthlessly as he taxed and tired himself. He sweated the sixty minutes to the death, and was always trying to find sixty-one minutes in the hour, and twenty-five hours in the day. Oxford which had only seen him in his prosperous youth did not at once realize this. Even in his youth he was diligent to a fault. "What's the score?" he said to a friend sitting on the bench at All Souls and watching the last game of a set after which the two were to join in. "Five, Three," was the reply. "Oh, I'll go back to my rooms, I think I can just finish my article for the Quarterly. Call me when it's over." It was over very soon; and his friend summoned him. "Have you finished your article?" "No, but I've done three more pages," he said.

After his youth he too seldom gave himself time to enjoy and be enjoyed. He was for ever dashing off to the next engagement almost before the first was completed.

But if not a popular, he was certainly a great, Chancellor. Oxford has seen greater men fill this post, a Cromwell, or a Wellington, neither of them it may be remarked, her own son, the one forced upon her, the other invited by her, from outside; but she has not experienced since Laud, if ever, anyone who made so much difference to her constitution, her daily life, and her fate. It is the irony of history that much of the effect of Lord Curzon's work was swallowed up in that of the Commission which followed it. The prelude is lost in the larger composition, but without the prelude, the note of that composition itself would have been entirely different, for Oxford perhaps tragically different.

The problem and the powers of Laud were in no way parallel. Oxford was in Laud's day a small, homogeneous, ecclesiastical community, a seminary, or set of seminaries, containing perhaps about a thousand resident members, graduate and undergraduate, all but a very few belonging to, or preparing for, a single profession of which Laud was the head; cloistered and cut off from the rest of the community, no fierce light playing on its rulers, no enemies or new-comers beating on the doors.

Lord Curzon had known Oxford and been known by her for

something under thirty years when he became her Chancellor. To hold this office, her first magistracy, had been one of his avowed ambitions. He had, too, already been designated by others as the natural successor to the eminent Oxford man under whom as a newly-fledged graduate he had begun his career in the great world.

When however, after some thirty-five years' tenure of the Chancellorship, Lord Salisbury died in 1903, Lord Curzon was in India still immersed in his Viceroyalty. Had he been in England it seems likely he would have been elected then. It is probably fortunate for Oxford that this did not happen. The time was ripening, but hardly yet ripe, for his advent and intervention. Lord Salisbury, though always ready when a *dignus vindice nodas* arose, had followed the old tradition, and been as Chancellor, for the most part, a figure-head and an absentee. Here, as in other spheres, he was a pungent critic but not a reformer. He had made scathing remarks about ' idle Fellows ' who had won their position by writing Greek Iambics, but he had let them alone. But now something more seemed called for. In the spring of 1906 Lord Goschen, who from the first had taken an active interest in these matters, told the Vice-Chancellor and others what he heard in political circles as to the imminence of a new Commission. The Campbell-Bannerman Government had just come in with an overwhelming majority, and many Liberals within and out of Oxford, thought the opportunity had arrived to follow the precedent of Gladstone's government in 1870. With this in mind Goschen took the characteristic step of looking into the finances of the University and Colleges, and asked to have statistical tables prepared to show what was being done by the Colleges voluntarily to assist the University in learning and science, in teaching and research.

These revealed that the Colleges, according to their means—two or three of the richer very conspicuously—had been most generous in this regard. At the same time that very remarkable son and benefactor of Oxford, the Hon. T. A. Brassey, who had headed a movement for the further endowment of his own College, Balliol, was beginning upon a similar effort for the assistance of the University as a whole.

In the midst of all this, on February 7th, 1907, Goschen, not a

young man, died quite suddenly, and the representatives of the University went down once more to Seacox Heath to bid the last farewell to the Chancellor whom they had inducted there not four years before. When the Chancellor dies the Vice-Chancellor takes charge. He is possessed of very considerable powers, but he is in a very delicate position. It is not for him to nominate or even suggest a Chancellor, indeed he is the last person to do so. And yet, as appeared again in 1925, he has much responsibility for guiding the process of deliberation so that a right choice, indeed *the* right and really representative choice, may be made. The deciding factors were in 1907, as they were in 1925, as indeed they generally are, public politics, academic politics, and College and personal influences.

Goschen's election had been exceptional. It was largely an agreed compromise. He was a Liberal Unionist who had become very much of a Conservative and had been nominated as his Chancellor of the Exchequer by Lord Salisbury when Lord Randolph Churchill "had forgotten him." Academically he was a 'moderate.' The Liberals, headed by men like Professor Pelham, accepted him as the most Liberal Conservative they could get, and the Conservatives because their "rising hope" was in India. Yet even Goschen had not been accepted without demur. The tradition had been that Oxford's Chancellor should belong to one of the old "governing families" and be of high, if possible the highest, public distinction. An attempt had been made by his old Balliol friends, notably by Dr. Henderson, Warden of Wadham, to run Lord Lansdowne, but he declined nomination. Lord Rosebery was then nominated, but his name had not been in the *Gazette* two days when he withdrew it and Goschen was elected without a contest. When the vacancy occurred again, Lord Lansdowne was sounded more deliberately by the Vice-Chancellor, but again definitely declined. Academic distinction had now come to be recognised as a very important factor. Lord Curzon fulfilled this, as well as all the other requirements. His Oxford career had been full both of promise and performance; his *cursus honorum* in public life even more so. But it began to be whispered that academically he was not so sound a Conservative as had been thought in 1903. "Die-hards"

like Mr. Case, the President of Corpus, who had no suspicions then, had doubts now.

College interests, too, made themselves felt. Christ Church naturally casting about for a man, bethought itself of the brilliant Lord Rosebery and the sound Lord St. Aldwyn. But if the Liberals could divide Christ Church, All Souls had now become a leading force, and Sir William Anson as its head, at the very height of his well deserved influence, himself a Balliol man and the intimate friend of Strachan-Davidson and of Raper the "King-Maker" of Trinity, also originally of Balliol, could divide the Liberals, and Curzon could count on much support from Balliol. And so it proved.

The Liberals were anxious to fight, and again induced Lord Rosebery to become their candidate. The Vice-Chancellor, by request, held a non-party meeting at Magdalen. Other names were suggested, among them those of Lord Milner and the Archbishop of Canterbury; but they were not pressed. In the end the two candidates went to the poll, the progressive and eager Conservative and the reluctant Liberal, Lord Curzon and Lord Rosebery. The poll was not heavy, but the majority was large and decisive.

The new reign was inaugurated with what seemed an innovation but was really a return to an older custom.

The University had fallen into the dull and indolent method of admitting the Chancellor in his own house. A Dining-Room Admission is like a Drawing-Room Wedding and quite unworthy of a great historic University, and one moreover which can set its stage in some of the most stately and appropriate buildings in Christendom. It was suggested to Lord Curzon that he should be admitted, in full conclave, by a real Convocation and in the Sheldonian Theatre. He was the very man to inaugurate a better *régime* and he was more than willing; but with constitutional caution he asked what were the precedents. There were none. No Chancellor had been admitted in Oxford since the Earl of Arran in 1715. The whole ceremony, mode and order of procedure, ritual directions, Latin formulæ, had to be invented *de novo*.

This was done, and on May 11 the Admission was carried through. Oxford was still fortunate in possessing as her noted Public Orator,

Dr. Merry, on such occasions incomparable. The Chancellor, who had won classical laurels at both Eton and Oxford, took his accustomed pains in preparing and pronouncing his own speeches, and at the climax the Vice-Chancellor announced to Convocation, "*Habemus Cancellarium.*"

The formula contained a truth that went beyond the ceremony and the hour. Lord Curzon was not the man to delay even for a moment getting to work. He took up at once the question on which Goschen had been cogitating, and Mr. T. A. Brassey working, the formation of an Endowment Fund, with a body of Trustees, to represent both resident and non-resident Oxford. It proved a somewhat thorny business.

Curzon and Brassey, though good friends, differed a good deal. Moreover the whole idea of Trustees, even though they might be old Oxford men, influencing the policy of the University by financing it, was viewed with distrust by many residents, and especially by the older-fashioned authorities of the Chest. The Provost of Oriel avowedly, and others unavowedly, were opposed to it. "Let them collect the money, and we will spend it," said Dr. Shadwell. They did not realize that the alternative was a Commission, or possibly they preferred a Commission.

It has achieved rather a modest than a brilliant success. It did not attract many large sums or conspicuous benefactors, though by the end of 1909 the total value of benefactions obtained amounted in round figures to about £143,000. Thanks largely to the genial and able chairmanship of Lord Balfour of Burleigh—aided by the efficient secretary found by Mr. Brassey, Mr. Nigel Bond—the keen personal interest he took in the business and his assiduity in coming down to Oxford and considering her needs on the spot, it has done not a little valuable work and aided very useful policies and projects. Specially noticeable among these were the new printed Catalogue of the Bodleian Library, Brassey's own peculiar care;—the underground Book Store, a pet fancy of the then Librarian, has proved less of a success;—the purchase of house property and sites in Oxford, perhaps as a precedent the most important step of all; assistance in founding the Gladstone Professorship of Political Theory and Institutions, the new Coin Room and other gifts to the

THE ENCAENIA OF 1908

Being a humble hint to the Chancellor based on the Encaenia of 1907, whereby so many idols of the market-place were cheerily set in the groves of the Benign Mother

By courtesy of Mr. Max Beerbohm.

Ashmolean; large subventions to the Taylorian and the cause of Modern Languages, assistance to the Engineering School, and the securing of the generous and invaluable Dyson-Perrins Benefaction for Chemistry.

It also kept a number of distinguished Oxford men in the great world in touch with their old University. But above all it encouraged and suggested liberality in others. *Damus ut dent alii* was suggested as its motto, and in more than one case this motto was justified.

Still, the time was not a favourable one. Englishmen had forgotten and had not relearned how to give, or at any rate to give grandly as they learned to do in the War, and have done since the War. The Universities and their merits were less known to the business public. And it was no one's special office, as Brassey had made it his, to undertake the task, distasteful and thankless, then even more so than to-day, of personal begging.

The Summer Term closed brilliantly. The first Commemoration of a Chancellor is the flowering of the aloe. It is not repeated in his lifetime. The Chancellor, with the aid, no doubt, of suggestions, chooses the recipients of Honorary Degrees himself, submitting a list which the Hebdomadal Council, though it has the power to challenge any name, by custom accepts *en bloc*. Consequently it is not only much larger but more picturesque and daring than the short lists of men who have run the gauntlet of the votes of varied and critical minds. Lord Curzon himself had received the Honorary D.C.L. on the nomination of his predecessor as Chancellor, Lord Goschen. He walked up the Sheldonian side by side with Lord Tennyson, ex-Governor General of Australia, and as he did so, glancing at the gallery, said: "Good for these young fellows to see two Proconsuls like you and me getting this honour." He now chose excellently and boldly, including among others Prince Arthur of Connaught, the Prime Minister (Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman), the American Ambassador (Whitelaw Reid), the Chancellor (Lord Loreburn), the Speaker (the Rt. Hon. James Lowther, now Lord Ullswater), Sir Edward Grey, now Lord Grey of Fallodon, Lord Charles Beresford, Sir Evelyn Wood, Dr. Butler, Master of Trinity, and Dr. Warre of Eton, Auguste Rodin, Hubert von Herkomer,

Mr. G. F. Bodley, Sir R. Douglas Powell, Sir N. Lockyer, Sir W. Ramsay, M. C. C. Saint-Saëns, the veteran and poetic Archbishop Alexander of Armagh, Mr. Rudyard Kipling and "Mark Twain," Canon Scott Holland, The Rev. A. H. Sayce, Mr. Sidney Colvin, Sir Sidney Lee, and, certainly not the least audacious or picturesque selection, Mr. William Booth, the "General" of the Salvation Army.

The function went well. The new Chancellor had been furnished by his friend, R. W. Raper, with a collection of Latin formulae of reception at once ingenious and happy. It need not be said that they were admirably given and that the Ex-Viceroy in his bullioned and brocaded robe looked and played his part to perfection.

All was soon over.

> The tumult and the shouting dies,
> The captains and the kings depart;

The string of brilliant guests had taken their farewell. Full Term had long ended, their Oxford hosts were dispersed or dispersing; Oxford itself was settling down for the comparative repose of the Long Vacation; even the Vice-Chancellor and other officials, who are detained after others depart for necessary official business, were beginning to bethink them of a well-earned holiday, when suddenly the thunder rattled and the lightning flashed from the midsummer sky.

Lord Goschen's apprehensions had been only too well founded. The promoters of a Commission had been working pertinaciously both in Oxford and London. Lord Curzon's election had not pleased them, and they decided to force the issue. For reasons known to themselves they opened their campaign not in the House of Commons, but in the House of Lords, and with a Prelate as their mouthpiece. With no word of warning to the Vice-Chancellor, on July 24th, Dr. Gore, Bishop at that time of Birmingham, rose in his place in the Upper Chamber, and asked for a Commission to deal with the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. His chief gravamen was not that Oxford and Cambridge did not contribute much to learning, science, and education, but that they were the preserve and playground of the "idle rich" and had little

sympathy with the poor. About the industrious rich he said little. He also took the line that the Universities were poor but the Colleges were wealthy, or at any rate many of them, and were inadequately taxed. This was perhaps true of Cambridge. It was hardly true of Oxford, as has been shown by the recent Commission. It may be noted that neither of the Colleges with which Bishop Gore was connected stood to lose much pecuniarily by the proposal. "*Cantabit vacuus*" as Henry Smith and Strachan-Davidson used to quote at Balliol. Indeed it was not difficult to show that many of the representations of the party which pressed for a Commission whether in the green pages of the *Westminster Gazette* or on the red benches of the House of Lords, were inaccurate and beside the mark. Bishop Gore was answered at the moment very effectively by his brother Bishops of Oxford and of Bristol; but what was most important was that time should be gained and that the matter should be delayed until the University as a whole had had an opportunity to make its voice heard in contradistinction to the clamour of one, and that the smaller, party. Though taken by surprise, the Vice-Chancellor and Sir William Anson met the crisis energetically. Lord Lansdowne, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and a number of spiritual and temporal peers, were written to. They were sympathetic and helpful. But the deciding factor was Lord Curzon himself, and it immediately became apparent how wisely Oxford had acted in electing him. He was able to point out that already he had begun to consider the reform of Oxford "from within." Mr. Asquith, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, like Gladstone a whole-hearted and conservative believer in Oxford, was more than friendly, and so was Lord Crewe, the son-in-law of Lord Rosebery, Lord President of the Council and the spokesman of the Liberal party in the House of Lords, one of the most brilliant of Cambridge men, and a true friend at all times to both Letters and Science. Lord Curzon himself addressed a full and persuasive memorandum to Lord Crewe in which he was able to plead with much weight the appeal with which he had already made so much progress. Finally Lord Crewe announced that the Government considered it would be unfair to deprive a young and vigorous Chancellor of the opportunity of trying his hand at reform from within, and that the ques-

tion of appointing a Commission would be deferred for the present. Thus these three men, Mr. Asquith, Lord Crewe and Lord Curzon, but Curzon especially, saved the Oxford and Cambridge that we know. The party which had put forward Bishop Gore did not cease from their efforts, but in the end the Commission was deferred till after the Great War. The Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, canny and courteous as was his wont, and a Cambridge man, had indeed summed up the matter. On July 28th, he wrote to the Vice-Chancellor who had addressed a final letter to him pleading for such a stay of execution. " I showed your letter to Lord Crewe, who was to speak for the Government. I think the question is left very well. The need of reform has been ventilated, but hurry has been deprecated." This postponement, as has been hinted already, made an incalculable difference. The cavillings at the " idle rich " and the privileged classes were hushed and died away. The signal services then rendered and the sacrifices made, by graduates and undergraduates alike of both Universities, and by the Colleges in their corporate capacity, could not fail to have their effect on the country, to make them better known and understood, and to set them far higher in the popular esteem than they had ever been before in all their long history ; and when the Royal Commission of inquiry and the consequential Statutory Commission came in the years 1923-6 they came neither in hostility nor suspicion, and indeed came, if that is not suspicious, " bearing gifts."

In this way the task was definitely entrusted to Curzon. Still two years short of fifty, though with a world of experience behind him and no little personal authority, and eager to attack such a labour, he set about it with all his promptitude, method and thoroughness.

His own words may be given. After quoting the language of the 1850 Commission which ran: " The Chancellor rarely appears in Oxford and seldom takes any part in Academic government. Still his office is one of much dignity and influence and his advice always has weight with the ruling body of the University," he proceeds, " My own conception has been at once more and less ambitious. I have felt that the Chancellor is in truth not so much the foremost official as the first servant of the University."

In the end it proved long and laborious, dragging on still uncom-

pleted through seven years, right up to the fateful summer of 1914.

Its course was beset with difficulties and delays. It was not so much that resident Oxford "hated to be reformed," as that there was not a whole-hearted support for reform from within. The keener reformers regarded it as at best a *pis aller* and a stop-gap; they were not over anxious to see it succeed, as they still would have preferred the more drastic alternative of a Commission steered by their political friends. The "die-hards" in the opposite camp preferred that reform if it came at all should be forced upon them from outside rather than it should be their own act.

There remained the middle party of moderates, the constitutional leaders of the University, who desired to see many things improved, and were indeed constantly working at quiet reforms, but were very apprehensive of danger to the autonomy of the University and the Colleges.

One thing may certainly be said, that nothing short of the Chancellor's own sincere zeal for improvement, energy, perseverance, assiduity and statesmanlike combination of decision and tact would have achieved such a measure of realisation as in the end was actually reached.

When the call came he was more than ready. He had indeed begun on the morrow of his election. He could count on the loyal support of Sir William Anson and of all the official staff of the University and of a progressive and open-minded Council. He was fortunate in inheriting from Lord Goschen, as his unofficial "correspondent," Mr. Percy Matheson, whom he had known in his Balliol days, Fellow and Tutor of New College, a member of Council, and specially well acquainted with both University and College affairs and with Education.

As early as the first of May, 1907, Lord Curzon had requested him to continue his functions and to write a report on the position of University affairs at the moment.

His comments on this report show that already he anticipated the line which would be taken if a Commission were demanded. "The public is convinced," he wrote, "that if the University is poor the Colleges are rich, and a movement will grow to take more of their property."

The rising of Parliament, after Lord Crewe's pronouncement, had brought a temporary lull, and given the University time to envisage the situation. The party of reform now turned to the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and Council.

It was a happy but ironical coincidence that the very first act of the Vice-Chancellor and Council when the University reassembled in October 1907 was to welcome what was constitutionally a revolution, the recognition of the Workers' Educational Association, commonly styled the W.E.A. The Vice-Chancellor immediately expressed his willingness to nominate the first representatives of this body, seven in number,[1] to sit with seven members of the "Extension Delegacy," as it was commonly called, on a composite Committee and on equal terms; and the University, with like readiness, legalised the arrangement, which worked excellently, and showed once more that sympathy with the poor student and the working-man was not the monopoly of the reformers. It had, too, a very great effect on the attitude of the Labour party.

The campaign of "Reform from within," however, definitely opened with the announcement of a circular letter to be addressed to the Chancellor, signed by Mr. A. L. Smith, Tutor of Balliol, and a number of others favourable to reform. Lord Curzon who had already determined to make a study of the persons, the problems, the institutions and the equipment, on the spot, now decided to do what no modern Chancellor had done before, to reside for a fortnight or so, to entertain and to make the acquaintance of the Oxford world for himself. He enlisted Mr. Buchanan Riddell, now Sir Walter Buchanan Riddell and Principal of Hertford College, as his Academic A.D.C. He had already, it is significant, engaged the Judge's Lodgings in St. Giles, before Bishop Gore showed his hand. On November 1st he came down, kept open house and an open mind. He interviewed a number of residents representing many different views, and with his usual rapidity and method tabulated the results, with a view to the preparation of a comprehensive

[1]The names were for the University: The Dean of Christ Church, Prof. H. H. Turner, Mr. A. L. Smith, Mr. Sidney Ball, Mr. J. A. R. Marriott, Mr. H. B. Lees Smith, and Mr. A. E. Zimmern, and for the W.E.A.: Mr. W. H. Berry, Mr. C. W. Bowerman, M.P., Mr. R. Campbell, F.S.S., Mr. J. M. McTavish, Mr. A. Mansbridge, Mr D. J. Shackleton, M.P., and Mr. A. Wilkinson.

scheme already forming in his mind. Nor did he forget to entertain a certain number of undergraduates. His parties whether of both sexes or of bachelors were very successful and he proved a most genial and even gay host.

On the first day of his stay he delivered the Romanes Lecture in the Sheldonian Theatre. The subject, "Frontiers," was one with which he was peculiarly fitted to deal and he handled it in a masterly manner, the only drawback being that the theme proved too large for even a full hour. A little later he writes that he is studying University Finance. "The present system seems to me to be very bad. There is no financial policy, no discussion of University Finance, no Annual Budget, no effective authority." It was understood that the various advocates of reform would now put their proposals in shape and that work upon them would commence with the New Year. On January 23, 1908, the Chancellor wrote to Matheson, "I am very much pleased at the recommencement of your letters; as soon as I can combine strength and leisure I will take the University question up. Meanwhile I am still waiting for the artillery of A. L. Smith's batteries." They proved to be of the old-fashioned muzzle-loading order and opened tardily. The reformers began in June 1908, in a letter to *The Times*, to complain of slow progress, but Lord Curzon was able to give them an effective answer.

All through the year, if more slowly than he himself liked, the scheme had been moving forward, and by the early autumn very considerable advance had been made, when a most untoward event put the prime mover himself more or less out of action.

"I have had a very bad motor accident," he wrote on October 5th, "which has precluded any of the final work on the Oxford Scheme which I contemplated. I have been in bed for three weeks, and am still there, and shall be permanently scarred."

The Jubilee of the University Museum was about to be celebrated. He was unable to attend, but wrote a letter from his bed. He had already inspected the Museum. "Some of the equipments are old-fashioned and obsolete, notably the old chemical laboratory, some excellent and up-to-date; in others great improvements are required."

Just at this time the Vice-Chancellor had told him that he desired

to nominate President Roosevelt and Mr. Arthur Balfour as Romanes Lecturers in 1909 and 1910 and asked him to do his best to persuade them to accept. "Roosevelt jumps at it," was his expression of the result. "Surely no one was ever asked to do a pleasant thing in such a pleasant way," were the opening words of Roosevelt's acceptance. Mr. Balfour said that, for himself, nobody but Curzon would have persuaded him to lecture.

"I consider it a great triumph," Lord Curzon wrote, "that I have secured for two successive years Balfour and Roosevelt."

A little later, "I have always meant to put forward Women's Degrees. It will be in a compartment by itself. The University can take or reject it, but I shall certainly put it forward."

Shortly after this he started, under medical advice, for a voyage to South Africa, promising Matheson to send the completion of the scheme from the Canaries. He wrote from there that he was making good headway, though hampered by want of secretarial assistance, and only allowed to work about three hours a day.

"It is a great tax doing all this far away from books and with no possibility of reference."

"Buluwayo, January 16, 1909. I am stranded here for a week, but am proceeding with my MS. Never will a 'Memo' have been written in more diverse circumstances, in cabins, on decks, in hotels, in trains, at odd moments, 6,000 miles from England and books."

With his return the stage of printing approached, and Curzon naturally became anxious. His letters show his remarkable combination of the *fortiter in re* with the *suaviter in modo*. If a man is to accomplish anything considerable, and especially if his task is to "reform," the first quality must predominate.

And he still had both the fear and the argument before him, "lest a worse thing befall." He was working under a respite not a reprieve. He stood between the ultra-moderates and the party of "thorough," Gore, Rashdall and the *Westminster Gazette*.

"One thing rather amuses me," he writes, "the complaints that my proposals are not more definite, combined with a sharp assault upon any proposal that does happen to satisfy that test."

He showed the greatest willingness to accept corrections and at

the same time firmness in resisting alterations in principle or the whittling down of substantial reforms.

> " There is scarcely a statement in my memo for which I have not definite authority. However, the main thing is to eliminate anything that will give offence. No one can write a Memo of two hundred pages on University Reform without treading on someone's toes and you have to contrast my humble movements with the heavy tramplings of a University Commission."

At this period letters passed almost daily between the Chancellor and Matheson, in addition to letters to the Vice-Chancellor and Sir W. Anson, and this though he was still far from well, and frequently in bed with severe pain. From the Vice-Chancellor and Anson he received expressions, which cheered him, of admiration for the skill and scope of the document, and its great value as furnishing both material and guidance for legislation. Sir William, however, constitutionally prudent and having his constituents to consider, counselled caution.

It was arranged that the Chancellor should come to Oxford and preside at special meetings of Council to consider it.

A hectic session was held at Hackwood just before the end, consisting of the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Heberden, Matheson and Gerrans, beginning early in the afternoon, carried on through tea and dinner, and ending at 2 p.m. to pass the " Memo " for the press.

Some question arose as to whether it should be published before the first Meeting of Council. On this Lord Curzon was clear and emphatic. " I see no advantage," he wrote, " in Council meeting with the Chancellor in the Chair, a thing unknown for centuries, to discuss a secret document. It involves the whole matter in an air of superfluous mystery."

Oxford is shy and some had scruples, but the Chancellor was right. With April the Red Book, or " Scarlet Letter " as it was dubbed, was published.

It received a very good press and also had an excellent reception

in critical Oxford, and the keener reformers like Prof. Gilbert Murray, Arthur Sidgwick and Estlin Carpenter were not the least laudatory. Strachan-Davidson, the Whig, and A. L. Smith, the Liberal, agreed in welcoming it. Walter Raleigh, a free lance, was warm in praise, and W. B. Gamlen, the cautious Secretary to the Chest, pronounced it "a monument of industry, knowledge and statesmanship and also full of literary charm." Miss Wordsworth wrote that it was "lucid, interesting and opportune," and Miss Penrose spoke with the same cordiality. Lord Morley in London thought it "a very effective piece of work."

It had been arranged that Council should proceed by resolutions, adopting *seriatim* the principle of the several items and then appointing Committees to consider and formulate definite proposals. These resolutions the Chancellor drafted himself.

He came to Council for the 27th and 28th of April. He proved an excellent Chairman, business-like, but not wanting in either geniality or humour, and found far more general agreement and less individual opposition than he had feared. The task was necessarily tedious, but finally the whole memorandum was gone through as arranged.

On May 20th, he dined with the Oxford Medical Graduates Club in London. He took the precaution of informing himself beforehand of the position up-to-date of the Oxford Medical School and expressed his special thanks to Professor Gotch.

On June 1st, he came down to Oxford for the celebration by Brasenose of its Quartercentenary, and the conferment of the Hon. D.C.L. on the Principal, Dr. Heberden.

On June 15th, he gave a luncheon at All Souls, and made an excellent full-dress speech to the Conference of the Press of the Empire.

The consideration of the measures of Reform was now going steadily forward: and Lord Curzon, though he was afraid that the Finance Board might be whittled down to nothing, was generally much pleased. Extra meetings of Council and its Committees were held in the early weeks of the Long Vacation, and the reports on the main points got in.

The task was resumed in the autumn of 1909 with the Chancellor

again in the Chair. It was a long business. "After the meeting," he wrote to Matheson on November 3rd, "it occurred to me that the Chancellor might himself have hurried on matters a little. If he did not do so, it was from a desire to let everyone be heard."

"What splendid work the Committees have done!" he wrote on March 10th. The effort of 1910 was to complete and bring out the Report of Council.

Again the task proved long. All through the summer term and far into the Vacation it continued. Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and Matheson were at work all July, and even after that a special editing committee was busy getting together the Report and assisting the Chancellor with an introduction which he was to prefix to it himself.

He had a conference with the Vice-Chancellor and Matheson on August 2, and on August 3 he wrote "We shall have a big task at the beginning of next Term."

Now again he was far from well and, as Matheson and Ball noted, he was much worn and worried.

However, *more suo*, he soon recovered his energy and his good temper. "I have practically been compelled to write everything afresh," he wrote. But he really liked doing so.

> "As you will see," he wrote, "the Report is at the same time my Report and that of Council, and the combination is I think rather effective. I have endeavoured to throw everything into a harmonious form and to give a little literary shape. It is the Introduction that will be quoted and criticized.
>
> By all means show anything to Gerrans if that excellent man is about. I am very grateful to you and Ball."

The Report appeared on August 28th. The Chancellor presided at a special meeting of Council on October 12th, to discuss procedure.

On November 8th, actual legislation began. The preamble of the Faculties Statute was introduced by the President of Magdalen, now ex-Vice Chancellor, having completed his term of office and been succeeded by Dr. Heberden, in Convocation on November

8th, and carried by a large majority. The Responsions Statute, making Greek optional, introduced by Matheson on November 22nd, was less fortunate.

On December 13th, 1910, the Chancellor came again to discuss the question of the Finance Board, and yet again on January 19th of the New Year, 1911. The Faculties Statute amendments dragged on through two terms, its case fought by the President of Magdalen with the aid of Anson and Strachan-Davidson, and at last was carried.

On May 16th, Matheson moved a modified reform, making Greek optional for men taking Honours in Mathematics and Natural Science, with more success, to the Chancellor's great satisfaction.

Matheson was away during the Autumn Term. When he came back he found the Chancellor anxious and chafing at the slow pace of progress. He was much afraid of a Commission which was still being agitated for. "The University has stumbled badly," he wrote. "We are appreciably nearer the edge of the gulf. Unless the University carries through the most important of the Reforms by the end of this Term or early in next, I shall not myself resist the demand for a Commission though of course I would not initiate or encourage it. If in three years the University is powerless to do the little we have asked of it then Reform from within is a figment."

In February and yet again in March he repeats the same warning and speaks of "the folly of the long delays that have postponed the final decision for nearly five years!" He is "in acute despair." "Think of what all the bright prospects of four years ago have dwindled down to."

On May 1st, he says, "I have seen or heard no signs of Gore moving as yet, but it will come sooner or later." And ten days later:

> "You will not be surprised when I tell you that I have given up the government of Oxford as beyond hope. When a statute like that of the Fees and Dues can only attract 63 votes out of a total of 600, Congregation itself ceases to be defensible. I am in a most difficult position. The Prime Minister consulted me last night as to the desirability of a Commission. I have merely

to lift a little finger to get it. Every consideration but one tempts me to say "Yes," and that is the conviction that a Commission would destroy the Oxford that we know, and that curriculum, finance, government and colleges would go in one sweep.

I am appalled at this prospect and yet Oxford never takes a critical step or faces a critical issue without bringing home to me that the *status quo* is impossible.

Can you say anything to guide my troubled mind in the matter?"

In the next letter (May 19) he asks for a paper "giving in a brief and succinct form, for submission to the Prime Minister, the information you recently gave me as to the change of view on the part of the working classes (resulting from the Tutorial Classes), who now seem to prefer that the University should go out to them rather than that they should come in numbers as undergraduates to Oxford."

Two days later, after first saying that he had been trying vainly to persuade Milner to become Chairman of the Finance Board and been "terribly disappointed," he returns to the W.E.A. question.

"The revelation you give me of the Working Men's attitude in their own Report is very frank and very ominous. How any man after reading it can desire a Commission in which such views would probably to some extent prevail, I cannot understand."

But there were those both in Oxford and London who were still eager for a Commission. On June 7th, the Chancellor was presented with a strongly signed petition begging him to procure one. With some difficulty, and at the cost of a good deal of labour, he staved it off. Still they were not satisfied. A final determined effort was made by a special deputation to the Prime Minister. Fortunately he was not of their opinion. He replied that he found that both at Oxford and Cambridge "there was too much divergence of opinion to justify him in taking action" and that he must

wait for more unanimity. Cambridge had now begun to react. It was about this time (June 1912) that the President of Magdalen had a chance interview with Mr. Asquith after a Foreign Office Dinner, and that to the President's great relief he said, "We'll let it simmer, we'll let it simmer." So in October the Reform business began again.

In the autumn of 1913 Lord Curzon adverts to the Report of the Finance Board and asks a number of questions as to facts and figures, the contributions of Colleges, etc.

Thus the fateful year 1914 was reached.

> January 22. "Glad to receive the opening letter of a New Year," he writes. "I am glad that after all Council have reverted to my proposal of an Hon. Degree Committee which they would not look at when I proposed it. Indeed if ever I glance at the Red Book it seems to me I have been wiser than I thought and if it had been decreed straightaway by a ukase I don't think it would have been half a bad thing for the University."
>
> March 6th. "Council have been doing a lot of work lately and I view with surprise the gradual conversion of Ball into an ancient Tory."
>
> June 5, 1914. "How grievous about Anson! I can scarcely express my feelings. I have been pressed by *The Times* to supplement their notice of this morning. I have sent something composed amid incessant interruption in the turmoil of a big party. Let me hear what is the talk in Oxford about (1) new M.P. (2) new Warden of A.S."

His next long letter is written on October 20th, after the War had been on foot for over two dire months.

> "I have been rather anxious," he writes, "about the War up-to-date, and even now am apprehensive about its long duration" (in this he agreed with Kitchener and not with the many who said it must be short). "At whatever cost I think we should see it through to an end that has real finality.

> "I have the Belgian Royal Family in my home at Hackwood, Belgian refugees in my stables, Belgian wounded in my house at Broadstairs, Belgian Relief Fund in my London House."

His last letter to Matheson, who was leaving Council and giving up his post as Correspondent, forms a very pleasing finale.

> "Thanks to you I have always been kept in touch with the thought and feeling, as well as the action, of the University, and have never lacked a wise counsellor.
>
> "During the period of our co-operation the University has not always moved as quickly as I should have liked or exactly on the lines I should have chosen. But substantial advance has been made and at any rate we have staved off for some years—an invaluable breathing time—an assault that at one moment looked really dangerous. I send you heartfelt thanks for the service you have rendered me, and on hearing that the V-Ch. approves I will ask Grant Robertson to take your place."

With the War normal Academic legislation ceased. It had been fortunate for Oxford that Lord Curzon when he was elected Chancellor was out of office. Now, in the autumn of 1914, he was swept into the world tides, first as a private citizen and then once more as a leading public man and Minister, becoming by degrees one of the foremost figures in the struggle, at first in war and then in peace.

When his Chancellorship became again a reality his unique work for Oxford, which had filled just seven years, was over. The "reform" which he had inaugurated and largely shaped was advanced in detail by the University itself, until it became incorporated and carried to conclusion by the Royal Commission and the Statutory Commission which followed, acting in the spirit and with the impetus of a new era, and armed with a power which he had not possessed, the command of the public purse and the Parliamentary Grant. In the appointment of these Commissions he took, of course, a prerogative part, and followed their action with interest; but their task was no longer his personal or official concern.

Yet his own work undoubtedly influenced theirs, " Astonishingly little," wrote Dr. Hogarth in his notice for the British Academy, " in general or in detail, divides the judgments of the Chancellor's Report from those of the Royal Commission, and none now will grudge a tribute to the comprehensive grasp and prescience which make one man's findings so largely anticipate those of a dozen Commissioners."

He returned from his exceptional attitude to being a Chancellor of the usual type, modern no doubt, but a modern modification of the older tradition. He came to Oxford when occasion called, he gave her his careful attention and advice whenever it was invoked. He presided of course in person at the Grand Encænia after the War. He appeared when special degrees had to be conferred such as that accepted by the Queen, when he walked in stately progress with Her Majesty from Balliol down " The Broad " to the Sheldonian, a splendid scene and pageant. He headed and entertained a Deputation which presented the D.C.L. to the King of the Belgians, who with the Queen was his guest at Carlton House Terrace. As time went on, increasing physical disability and preoccupation made his visits less frequent. He was often obliged to receive the Vice-Chancellor and Oxford visitors in his spartan bedroom, or lying out on a day-bed, obviously weary and suffering, in the park at Hackwood. How different from the days when Matheson found him cheerily raking his own gravel paths. But ill or well he would always give his mind to the question in hand and rise to the height of any real call, and the flame and sometimes the flash of the wit and humour, which in his youth had dazzled and delighted the " Souls " and the Crabbet Club, would burn and brighten again.

Among his happiest appearances in Oxford were some of his latest. At the Centenary Banquet of the Union Debating Society his speech was not only the best of the evening, but could not have been bettered. At the end of the Summer Term of 1923 he was persuaded to be present at the celebration of the Tercentenary of the Botanic Garden, a favourite resort, where he had loved to stroll with " Bob " Raper in undergraduate days, and on a temporary platform under a spreading tree, delivered a brief happy discourse on " Gardens." He had to dash back to meet a gathering of Ambassadors at Hackwood,

and he was present for little more than an hour, but wrote that he enjoyed every minute.

In the following summer (1924) he came for the Tercentenary of Pembroke College as he had come before the War for similar celebrations at Brasenose and Wadham. Again he was in a genial mood and delighted all his hearers at the Dinner, speaking most happily on the *rôle* of the smaller colleges. He charmed, too, the party with whom he breakfasted the next morning at Magdalen, among them being, as it happened, his successor, Lord Cave, and Lady Cave, whom he pleasurably startled by remembering after many years the work and personality of Sir Lloyd Mathews, and when she said he was her brother, seemingly affecting surprise.

He had meditated a longer visit the next year, repeating his experiment of November 1907, residing for a short period in the Summer Term, and entertaining and making acquaintance with the resident University old and young. It was, indeed, sad that this project was never carried out. It might have dispelled or diminished much preconception and prejudice about him, and would have made his personality known to a new young generation of Oxford men and women. But fate denied this enjoyment to both Chancellor and student.

It remained for him to be revealed after his death as a Benefactor. Already in 1908 he had procured for the Bodleian a notable benefaction, a splendid collection of Sanskrit MSS., which made the Library richer in such MSS. than any outside India. It was his influence with the large-minded and munificent Prime Minister of Nepal, Sir Chandra Shum Shere Jung Bahadur Rana, on whom, at the Chancellor's suggestion, the University had conferred the Degree of D.C.L. at the Encænia of 1908, which induced him to purchase and present these literary treasures.

Now he bequeathed to the University, to be preserved if possible in the Bodleian, his collection of Napoleonic books, prints and relics, together with the furniture of the room in which they had been kept.

What Lord Curzon would have done as Chancellor had he fallen from the first on days of ordinary routine it is difficult to conjecture.

Something he would probably have discovered to make his reign memorable. As it chanced it was a case of "the hour and the man." He was called on to save as well as to serve Oxford, and he welcomed the opportunity in the spirit of the "Happy Warrior." That he loved Oxford there can be no doubt. Whether loved or not in return, he should certainly be highly esteemed by her.

He counted nothing that affected Oxford as indifferent to himself. If nothing was too great nothing was also too small. The mass of letters on University affairs which he left, neatly sorted and docketed, is astounding. He received, sought and unsought, an immense number. He replied to each and all, and might have used with truth the words of the greatest of letter-writers. "See in what large characters I write to you in mine own hand!"

He wrote on all sorts of topics, Geography, Anthropology, The Indian Institute, the University and City Buildings, the creation of new professorships or the appointment to the old for many of which he was an elector, or with regard to which he was consulted by the Prime Minister or other important external authorities.

He was delighted on occasion to be appealed to on the question of whether the Galliambic was a permissible metre for the Chancellor's Latin Verse Prize. "The matter," he wrote, "is one in which I take a natural interest both as a donor of the Prize and also as a former runner up for it, for in 1881 I was published as *Proxime accessit*."

His unfailing and singularly kind letters of condolence or congratulation, when Heads like Dr. Daniel of Worcester or Dr. Heberden of Brasenose were removed by death, or when Dr. Macan retired from University College after a strenuous and brilliant tenure, or old friends like J. A. Smith were elected to Professorships, were greatly valued.

He was always ready to throw the *ægis* of the University over any member who could rightly claim it. The young men were less shy of approaching him than their elders. The Master of the "Drag," Mr. "Volly" Heath, killed early in the War, did not hesitate to ask him to head a subscription for procuring new kennels for his hounds. The President or Secretary of the

Canning and Chatham, or the President of the Union, invited him freely to their dinners and ceremonies and he enjoyed nothing more than accepting. The President of the O.U.D.S. did the same. He liked pomp and state on occasion but he also loved to unbend and be young again.

On the other hand it is hardly necessary to say that both the discipline and the dignity of the University were never in fairer or firmer hands.

In the spring of 1910 he conceived the idea of arranging a Royal visit to Oxford, of a rare and spectacular kind. King Edward's death in the early summer destroyed the half-formed project and in its place he had to lead the University deputation which presented the loyal Address to King George V.

A lasting memorial of Lord Curzon's effective and vitalizing Chancellorship is a resuscitated St. Edmund Hall. The Commission of 1877 had decreed, as Curzon notes in the Red Book, the absorption, subject to the life interest of the existing Heads, of the old public Halls in Colleges. Only St. Edmund Hall, the oldest, the most picturesque, remained, thanks to Dr. Edward Moore, who, appointed in 1864 as a young man of 29, was still Principal in 1907, when Lord Curzon succeeded; and continued so until 1913. But it was living with a halter round its neck.

The Chancellors were the Visitors of the Halls, and encouraged by the advent in 1907 of a new and vigorous Patron, some of its members made an appeal to him in the December of that year. Lord Curzon from the first showed himself sympathetic. The Bishop of Carlisle, who became Principal in 1913, spoke at a later date with justice of his "constant kindness to the Hall." He favoured its preservation as an independent academic entity. But there were many difficulties. Queen's College, though inclined to be generous with pecuniary assistance, was at first, and not unnaturally, reluctant to forego its claims, and, indeed, it was doubtful whether the Hall could maintain itself alone. Without support it pretty certainly could not. To strengthen its pecuniary position an Act of Parliament had to be passed severing the Benefice of Gatcombe from the Principalship. In this Sir William Anson was most helpful. Then a new statute must be adopted by the University

and approved by the King in Council. It was not till 1913 that these difficulties were overcome. Then, in June 1914, encouraged by the Chancellor, who himself gave £100, a public appeal was put out. Money was coming in, and over £1,000 had been promised when the War suspended all operations.

Unforgetful and undaunted, the Chancellor took the matter up again in the spring of 1919 in a letter to Council, suggesting that the University should now espouse the cause of the Hall as an institution of its own. He also pleaded its case with the Endowment Fund Trustees. His advocacy was successful with both. The Hall was set on a sound footing. With a new constitution, increased numbers, the old buildings repaired, and fresh accommodation added, it is more prosperous to-day than it had ever been.

He took a keen and constant interest in the award of Oxford's Honorary Degrees, the old distinguished D.C.L. especially. He was all for honouring undoubted merit, and the most indubitable in his view was that of public service, though he was eager to recognize literature—he himself suggested both Swinburne and Kipling—and also notable discovery and eminent art. He was encouraged in his high estimate of their value by the letters sent him by the most distinguished recipients. One of the most striking may be quoted, that of Marshal Foch in May 1919.

> " Cher Lord Curzon,
>
> " J'apprecie à toute sa valeur l'honneur que l'Université d'Oxford veut bien songer à me décerner. Je sais la place qu'elle a tenue et tient encore dans l'histoire de la pensée et dans l'action de l'Empire Britannique. Ses élèves ont voulu prendre dans la guerre un part d'autant plus grand que les liens qui unissent leur université à la vie nationale étaient plus étroits. Beaucoup ont donné leur vie ; tous ont servi avec éclat.
>
> " J'ai eu l'honneur de leur commander ; je ne l'oublie pas."

In the Spring of 1924 the Chancellor's aid was invoked by St. Hugh's College to end an unfortunate deadlock which had arisen in its administration. His prompt adjudication relieved the personal situation at the moment, and also secured not only for St. Hugh's

but for the Women's Societies generally a " more defined and harmonious co-ordination among the authorities, by a considered revision of their Constitution." It is noticeable that Somerville College now made the Chancellor its Visitor.

About the happiness of their relation with him, his successive University Correspondents, Mr. Matheson, Mr., now Sir, Charles Grant Robertson and Mr. Jenkinson speak with one voice.

His untiring industry, his attention to every letter and every point, amazed and impressed them all equally. He asked not only for facts but for "*aperçus*, prospects, policies." Above all he asked for what he gave, complete confidence. Candour, " the maximum of candour," about both things and people, was what he postulated.

" No one could ever have been kinder than he was. The idea that he was an Olympian Jove imposing his superiority on anyone in not so exalted a position was, so far as my experience goes, a ridiculous caricature " ; " a great man with whom it was a privilege to work." So Sir C. Grant Robertson writes of him.

Perhaps the best summing up of Curzon's attitude to Oxford is to be found in his own words which form the eloquent conclusion of the Introduction written by him to the " Gray Book," the Report issued in 1910 on behalf of Council upon the earlier volume, "The Principles and Methods of Reform."

> " We have made no attempt to build a new Oxford on the ruins of the old. We have too profound a conviction of the part that is still capable of being played by the older universities and, as we think, by our own in particular, in the life of the nation, to wish in any degree to impair its essential character or its inspiring influence. We want Oxford to remain what it is, but to become, if it may be, better : still to keep alive the transmitted flame, but to see that it illumines every corner of the temple of knowledge, and is accessible to all sections of the community : above all since our University is an imperial training ground for character and intellect, to arrange that the scheme of life which produces the former is worthy and sound, and that the scheme of instruction which develops the latter is comprehensive and efficient."

Surely Oxford's gratitude should be his meed for such faith and such affection, nor less for the self-sacrificing intensity with which he toiled to implement this high profession. Surely as the years go on, and like some receding peak he towers up among the Chancellors of the past, it will be rendered to him more ungrudgingly than it was in his youth or in his mid-career.

"I have been dogged through life," he said, "by an undergraduate epigram." So it was in the past, so to some extent it still is. To-morrow appreciation will take the place of criticism. As Horace wrote of Augustus,

> "*Urit enim fulgore suo qui praegravat artes*
> *Infra se positas, extinctus amabitur idem.*"

CHAPTER VII

THE COMING OF WAR

1914-1916

Lord Curzon had long been apprehensive of a European war; and he had long foreseen whence it would arise. "In my opinion," he had written as far back as the autumn of 1901, "the most marked feature in the international development of the next quarter of a century will be, not the advance of Russia—that is in any case inevitable—or the animosity of France—that is hereditary—but the aggrandisement of the German Empire at the expense of Great Britain; and I think that any English Foreign Minister who desires to serve his country well, should never lose sight of that consideration."[1]

On his return from India, his attention was drawn to military matters by the introduction of Mr. Haldane's Territorial Army Scheme; and his study of the position very soon satisfied him not only that the country was unprepared to cope with an emergency of the kind which he believed might quite probably arise, but that under the proposed scheme there was very little likelihood of her ever becoming so. He admired and heartily commended the public spirit of all who, by joining the Territorial Army, showed that they were willing, often at no small sacrifice, to take up on their own account the burden which ought to fall equally upon all. But he regarded the Territorial Army as altogether inadequate to the demands which he felt certain would sooner or later be made upon it. He never could persuade himself that the force, in spite of the

[1] Letter to Lord George Hamilton, September 25th, 1901.

admirable spirit by which it was animated, would prove equal either in numbers, in equipment, in training, or in knowledge of the art of war, to holding its own against the highly trained troops of Continental Europe. And he threw himself whole-heartedly into Lord Roberts' campaign in favour of National Service.

He believed that universal military training for home defence, as advocated by the National Service League of which he became a Vice-President, would have a moral, spiritual and educative value of the highest order—an argument in itself which influenced him powerfully in its favour. But he was also satisfied that some form of compulsion was essential on purely military grounds. He had not at first thought of British troops—even of the regular army—as being ranged up along side of the battalions of continental nations on a European battlefield. " We require an army, not in order that we may march about on the continent and bombard or attack foreign towns—that is the very last purpose to which a British force is ever likely to be put," he told a crowded audience at Hanley ; " but we want it to garrison our own foreign possessions, to defend them against invasion or attack, and above all to prevent our enemy from effecting a successful landing upon our own shores."[1]

Gradually the conviction was forced upon him that circumstances might quite probably arise in which British troops would be called upon to play a part in a still wider field. His reading of events as he cast his gaze over Europe lent little support to the easy optimism of those who argued that popular Governments would insist on a peaceful solution of international rivalries. In all that was going on around him he saw little sign of the near approach of the millennium. On the contrary, neither the ideals nor the ethics of modern democratic Governments seemed to him to differ materially from those of the more autocratic forms of Government which they were in process of, or had succeeded in, supplanting. Their ambitions and their methods were the same. In his view it was a case of *plus c'a change plus c'est la même chose*. " I believe there has never been a time in modern history when the standard of international honour has been lower or more unashamed. . . . Meanwhile old Carnegie goes about prating of peace ; a great palace is built

[1]Speech at Hanley on October 21st, 1910.

for the tribunal at the Hague, and the newspapers gush about arbitration. The real master of the situation is primitive man."[1] He was not alone in his belief. Early in the summer of 1911, M. Clemenceau signalised a brief visit to England by becoming a member of the National Service League. The fact that he did so was not in itself a matter of any great consequence ; but it was, assuredly, a little unusual. M. Clemenceau himself was well aware of this. It was always a delicate matter he admitted to Lord Roberts, the President of the League, for a public man to intervene even indirectly in party or national movements in a country other than his own ; but he excused himself for having done so on the ground that in the circumstances of the time, the creation of an English army, truly representative of the British people and of their position of authority in the counsels of the world, was a matter not merely of domestic, but of European interest.

The significance of M. Clemenceau's gesture was not lost on some at least of those who were watching with grave misgiving the trend of events in continental Europe. None knew better than Lord Roberts with what anxiety the military authorities in France looked on at the modest provision made by successive British Governments against possible military requirements ; and he turned instinctively to Lord Curzon for counsel and assistance. " No one in the present Government or, so far as I know, in the late Government," he wrote on June the 6th, 1911, " seems to take a serious view of the change that is taking place in Europe and in the world generally to our detriment. Both parties seem either blind to what is going on, or desire to keep the public in ignorance." In Lord Curzon, he found a sympathetic listener ; and, encouraged by the aid which he had already rendered to the National Service League, both in Parliament and in the country, he laid his anxieties plainly before him. What chance was there, he asked, of other countries accepting arbitration and curtailing their military preparations ? It was only necessary to glance at what was being done elsewhere to find the answer to that question. France was putting the whole of her able-bodied men under arms, and, dissatisfied with the number which this heroic measure gave her, was working out a scheme for raising

[1] Letter to Lord Lansdowne, September 29th, 1911.

a formidable force of Senegalese to aid her; Germany was adding yearly to her naval and military forces; Austria, by changing from a three to a two years' enlistment, was greatly strengthening the land forces at her disposal; Turkey, with the aid of German officers, was building up a considerable army; while Russia and Japan were both engaged on vast and costly schemes of re-organisation based on actual experience of recent war "Are all these countries governed by fools and idiots," he asked, "and have we the monopoly of brains? Or are we the fools and idiots, and are they governed by wise and patriotic men?"[1] History, he feared, would provide the answer.

Lord Curzon shared to the full alike his views and his misgivings. In 1909 he had wound up a two days' debate in the House of Lords on a National Service Bill introduced by Lord Roberts; and, in spite of the united opposition of the Government and Opposition front benches, had had the satisfaction of securing for it 103 supporters in the division against 123 mustered against it by the Whips of the two parties. Two years later he had again spoken strongly in favour of some change on a Motion brought forward by Lord Roberts which, without specifically raising the question of compulsory service, denounced the Government for the inadequacy of their military preparations. The division on this occasion followed the usual party lines, and the Motion was carried by a large majority. But experience had now convinced him that little was to be gained by pursuing the matter along the lines of party; and when, in 1913, he again took part in a debate on the preparedness of the country, he adopted a different course. He urged that the question should be lifted out of the arena of party politics and should be submitted to a conference of representatives of both parties in the State.

The proposal was received with silence by the Government and with ill-disguised suspicion by the Radical press; and, at a Primrose League gathering at the Albert Hall, Lord Curzon took occasion to repeat and elaborate what he had said in the House of Lords. The proposal, he said, was no random suggestion of his own; it was a *bona fide* offer made with the full knowledge and approval of the Conservative leaders; there was no *arrière-pensée* behind it; it

[1] Letter from Lord Roberts to Lord Curzon, June 6th, 1911.

concealed no stratagem; it was put forward in all sincerity in the interests of the security of the nation.

Lord Curzon was, however, too deeply tarred with the brush of compulsion for him to be *persona grata* to those who were determined to countenance no departure from the voluntary system. The attitude of the Government was reflected in the comments of the Liberal press.

> "Lord Curzon shows us the objective when he represents Sir John French as saying that voluntary effort is quite inadequate for the due defence of these islands. The Liberal party is certainly not going to confer with its opponents on this basis; but we are bound to take Lord Curzon's speech as another step forward in the conversion of the Tory party to compulsory militarism."[1]

Nothing, therefore, came of a contribution offered in all sincerity towards the solution of a problem of steadily increasing gravity, and the country continued its march towards the abyss which was presently to open out in front of it, hoping that, somehow or other, the admitted deficiencies of the Territorial Army would be made good and that, in the last resort, Providence or the British Fleet would intervene to save the Nation from disaster. "How different the war would have been," Lord Curzon wrote, a short time after the die had been cast which brought the people of Great Britain face to face with the greatest crisis in their history, "had the country adopted National Service ten years ago. We could then have poured thousands into the field and have turned the scale. As it is we cannot contribute more than 100,000, without incurring serious risk."[2]

It was not only in the matter of its military preparations that he found the country unorganised for war.

> "When the war broke out," he wrote on August the 22nd, "I offered myself to Asquith for non-political work in any capacity. But none has been offered me; and there is some-

[1] The *Westminster Gazette* of May 3rd, 1913.
[2] Letter to the Hon. F. N. Curzon, August 28th, 1914.

thing rather pitiful in the thought that at 39 one was thought fit to rule 300 millions of people, and at 55 is not wanted to do anything in an emergency in which the national existence is at stake."[1]

The time was not far distant when he was to have a very different story to tell—"As for me," he wrote in December 1916, "I am to be the Conservative watch-dog in the War Committee of four, besides, I believe, being President of the Council, Leader in the House of Lords and a few other things. Quite enough to break me down."[2] But this was not until after the fall of Mr. Asquith's Coalition Government and the succession of Mr. Lloyd George to the Premiership; and during the early days of the war Lord Curzon fretted miserably under the sentence of inaction which seemed to have been passed upon him.

For a time he found occupation in addressing crowded meetings in different parts of the country, on the origin of the war and the nature of the task which faced the people, in pursuance of a programme of education which he had himself propounded in the columns of *The Times*. But the public work which came his way—even after he became a member of the first Coalition Government in the summer of 1915—still left him long hours of bitterly resented leisure, felt all the more acutely because in the uncertainties of the times he regarded it as his duty to remain at home. "I don't think that any of us will go north at all," he wrote in August. "I don't like the idea while all this is going on. We may be called upon at any moment for local or other work and I feel we ought all to stay at home."[3]

Lack of definite occupation led to morbid pessimism—

> "I do not like the way things are going, the unthinking optimism of everyone, the selfishness of the sporting and pleasure loving world, the slackness of the middle classes, the indifference and money squabbles of the lower, the foolish reticence and mystery of the Government. All these are unpleasant symptoms."[4]

[1] Letter to Lord Lamington. [2] *Ibid.*, December 7th, 1916.
[3] Letter to Hon. F. N. Curzon, August 28th, 1914.
[4] Letter to Lord Lamington, March 21st, 1915.

LORD CURZON AT TATTERSHALL CASTLE
Bequeathed by him to the nation

And in despair he fell back upon his pen, the never failing companion of his busiest and his most idle hours. It was during the year 1915 that the elaborate Report of the Committee of Trustees of the National Gallery—written by Lord Curzon himself—was presented to Parliament; and during the summer of the same year there appeared within a few days of each other two volumes, one of selected speeches and essays delivered and written by Lord Curzon since his return from India, with the title "Subjects of the Day," the other of War Poems and other Translations which, as he informed his readers in the preface, had at different times lent distraction to his leisure hours.

The circumstances during the early phases of the war were, indeed, such as to place an almost intolerable strain upon a restless nature like Lord Curzon's; for while little work worthy of his abilities or of his position in public life was forthcoming, he was equally debarred by a fine conception of patriotic duty from the normal activities of a leader of the Opposition, since criticism of those burdened with the responsibility of guiding the country through the perplexing maze of these times of biting anxiety, seemed more likely to damage than to assist the national cause. As the days passed, something of the uneasiness of spirit from which he suffered became apparent in his public utterances. At his urgent request the period over which the Government had intended that Parliament should stand adjourned, after the rising of the two Houses at the end of November 1914, was curtailed so far as the House of Lords was concerned; and at its meeting in the first week of January 1915, Lord Curzon, in the absence of Lord Lansdowne from illness, referred frankly to the position in which the Opposition found themselves. They had no share either in official responsibility or in executive authority in connection with the war. He himself knew little more of what was happening than anyone else outside the charmed circle of the Government and their professional advisers. These disabilities, he hastened to add, did not deter them from giving the Government their unstinted support. They had refrained and would continue to refrain from making speeches and asking questions "where speech was tempting and criticism would have been easy." Yet they could not forget that they represented a considerable

portion of the nation and that in their representative capacity they held a watching brief and were under an obligation to voice the feelings, the anxieties and the fears of those whom they represented. Governments, he delicately reminded them, were very human institutions and a Government that was subjected to no criticism, even in a great national crisis, tended "to become careless, to mistake silence for acquiescence, and very likely to develop an extravagant and almost pontifical sense of its own authority."[1]

These words, carefully chosen and spoken with due restraint, reflected what was passing through his mind. In council with his colleagues on the Conservative benches he spoke his thoughts with greater freedom. Much had happened to give rise to legitimate uneasiness in the public mind. The admitted loss of three cruisers, the Hogue, the Cressy and the Aboukir; the suspected loss of a still more important unit of the fleet, H.M.S. Audacious; the fall of Antwerp and the disaster which had overtaken Admiral Craddock, to mention but a few, were incidents which called for explanation. Yet they were expected to give a mute and almost unquestioning support to all that the Government did; to maintain a patriotic silence about the blunders that had been committed; to give their active support to recruiting while kept in ignorance of the results. Recent proceedings in the House of Lords had painfully emphasised the impotence—almost the humiliation—of their position. The Secretary of State for War had read them exiguous memoranda of platitudes which were the common knowledge of the music-hall and the market-place; had interpolated a curt affirmative or negative to the solitary speech to which he had deigned to listen,and had then marched out of the Chamber and left the rest of the debate to colleagues who either affected ignorance or screened their silence behind the convenient mask of his authority. They were, in fact, caught up on the horns of a particularly painful dilemma: if they subjected the Government's conduct of the war to effective criticism they laid themselves open to a charge of unpatriotic action; if, on the other hand, they preserved silence it was generally presumed that they shared with the Government responsibility for what was done.

[1] Speech in the House of Lords on January 6th, 1915.

The position was undoubtedly a difficult one; but it was the inevitable outcome of the British Parliamentary system and there seemed to be only two possible ways out of it. A statement agreed to by the Leaders of both political parties might be published, setting forth in as precise terms as possible the relations between the Government and the Opposition and making clear the extent, if any, of the responsibility for what was done that might properly be attributed to the latter; or, provided that the Government were prepared to share the direction of affairs with their political opponents, an equal measure of responsibility might be accepted. In other words a Coalition Government might be formed.

This latter alternative was always viewed by Lord Curzon with dislike. It would tie the hands and seal the lips of those who entered it. It would make them responsible for many things which they ought in due course to subject to searching criticism. And with men so fundamentally divided on all the outstanding questions of the day, he feared that it might lead at the nerve centre of the British Empire to a fatal and irretrievable collapse. And when, four months later, this device, so alien to British practice and tradition, was suddenly seen to provide the only means of escape from an untenable position, he still viewed the prospect with serious misgiving.

> "Suddenly the Ministerial edifice has crumbled," he wrote on May the 18th, "kicked over by old Jack Fisher. Winston has been shot out of the Admiralty; a lot of other people, including Haldane, are to go permanently and the long expected and (by me) much dreaded Coalition is to come into being. Whether I shall be wanted or not in some minor capacity I do not know."[1]

He was not left long in doubt, and on May the 27th, he kissed hands on his appointment to the Cabinet, and received from His Majesty the Privy Seal. "I joined the Government to-day as Lord Privy Seal," he wrote. "It is a big experiment dictated by forces almost outside personal control."[2]

[1] Letter to Lord Lamington.

[2] Letter to Sir Rennell Rodd

The day should have been a great one in Lord Curzon's life. The goal of which he had dreamed twenty years before had at length been reached. Yet the fulfilment of the dream differed strangely from the dream itself. The keen enthusiasms of those earlier days had lost something of their edge, worn down by the passage of the years and the disillusionment wrought by the chequered experiences of public life. Ill-health and physical suffering beyond the ordinary gnawed ceaselessly at the springs of his vitality. "I see pictures of you at Murren, robust and happy," he wrote to one of the congenial companions of earlier days. "I am never the former and only negatively the latter."[1] And with such apprehension did he view the prospect of a Coalition Government that, when at last the chance of becoming a Cabinet Minister was within his grasp, he hesitated on the very threshold. "I am sorry that you are in doubt," wrote a friend while his decision hung in the balance; "but for the country's sake I hope you will try to be one of them. I have watched your career for the last thirty years . . . and if you will allow me to say so, I feel that in this crisis you are a needed man—one with the indispensable singleness of aim."[2]

His earliest experiences as a Cabinet Minister did little enough to reconcile him to the difference between the glowing visions which he had once formed of Cabinet office and the crude realities of the position as he found them. He was in charge of no great Department of the State; he was the arbiter of no one's destinies. There was little scope, consequently, for the application of the outstanding administrative ability which had won for him so great a reputation while in India. Moreover the haphazard method of transacting business greatly shocked his precise and methodical mind. The meeting at uncertain intervals of a body of more than twenty members, with no agenda to warn them of what was to be discussed and no record of the decisions which had been reached to refer to after they had dispersed, contrasted oddly with the business-like procedure of the small and efficient Executive Council over which he had himself presided in India and struck him as providing an outstanding and almost ludicrous example of the traditional amateur-

[1] Letter to Mrs. Asquith, afterwards Lady Oxford.
[2] Letter from Sir R. Haggard.

ishness of the British people. The peculiar genius of the race for muddling through somehow, had its limitations ; it failed when the art of Government ceased to be a pastime and became an exact science ; its virtue passed from it when it was brought up against the hard realities of a mechanically efficient age. A system under which cases frequently arose when matters were left so much in doubt that a Minister went away and acted upon what he thought was a decision, which subsequently turned out to be no decision at all, or was repudiated by his colleagues, stood self-condemned. "No one will deny," declared Lord Curzon at a later date, "that a system, however embedded in the traditions of the past and consecrated by constitutional custom, which was attended by these defects, was a system which was destined, immediately it came into contact with the hard realities of war, to crumble into dust."[1]

Yet change was not effected without a struggle, and many months were to elapse before the unwieldy Cabinet of 1915 was supplanted by a smaller and more business-like body of half-a-dozen during the closing days of 1916, and the happy inconsequence of pre-war days by the method and precision demanded by a sterner age. And until these changes were brought about, Lord Curzon moved restlessly hither and thither in quest of work which might prove of definite value to the State.

The contemplated Ministry of Munitions seemed to offer the opportunity which he sought, and after piloting the Bill authorising the establishment of the new Department successfully through the House of Lords, he looked forward eagerly to taking a share in its activities. The story of his disillusionment is told in a letter written four months later to Lord Crewe as Leader of the Government in the House of Lords.

> "As regards munitions, as you know, I was invited by the Prime Minister and Lloyd George to go into the Department and represent it in the House of Lords. Since the Committee meetings at which you and I were present, I have never once been invited inside the place or been made a party to any of the proceedings. I offered at the beginning to go there and work

[1] Speech in the House of Lords, June 19th, 1918.

if they would give me a room. No notice was taken of the offer and I have never received a single paper or item of information about the work. In these circumstances I naturally preferred to resign my connection with the Department."[1]

In whichever direction he turned he found his hopes of definite and sustained work disappointed.

"Do you not think we might have a more equal distribution of labour in the House of Lords?" he asked Lord Crewe. "I have now been a member of the Government for over seven months and during that time I have only (apart from the representation of Departments) spoken once for the Government in the House, and on that occasion at my own suggestion. On no single occasion have I been invited to bear my share in the burden. . . . Indeed I often wonder why I was invited to join or am in the Government at all."

The sense of uselessness preyed heavily upon his mind.

"Twenty years ago I was thought good enough by Lord Salisbury to represent the Foreign Office single-handed in the House of Commons; but now apparently I am not qualified to represent the Government in any debate on any subject whatever. I have accepted the position without a murmur and have been content to sit in silence for seven months. But I have now decided to speak, since I can really find no ground for continuing to be a member of a Government to which I am not permitted to render any service, all the more that I am excluded from the Committee which deals daily with questions and countries to the study of which I have devoted thirty years of my life."[2]

His exclusion from the War Committee which came into existence in the autumn of 1915 did not deter him, however, from taking

[1] Letter dated January 6th, 1916.
[2] Letter to Lord Crewe, January 6th, 1916.

a leading part in the discussion of such questions as came before the Cabinet as a whole. The new Government had not been long in Office when they were called upon to take a decision of far-reaching importance affecting the whole strategy of the war. On the Gallipoli Peninsular a position approximating to that of stalemate seemed to have been reached. During the summer a Cabinet Committee charged with the duty of supervising the Dardanelles operations had pressed on vigorously with the campaign. Lord Curzon, who at the invitation of the Prime Minister had joined the Committee, impressed by the ever expanding vista of possibilities which success seemed likely to open up, was constant in urging the despatch of the reinforcements necessary to ensure it. At the first meeting of the Committee on June the 7th, it had been decided to send out three divisions of the new army, and before the end of the month to add to these two Territorial divisions, making a total reinforcement of five divisions of fresh troops in all. With these additions to his force, Sir Ian Hamilton gave the Committee to understand that success might be regarded as assured ; and Lord Curzon had been prominent in urging their early despatch.

The story of the disappointment of these too sanguine expectations is now a matter of recorded history. Failure in the field on the Gallipoli Peninsular was followed by changes both in the plan of campaign itself and in the body entrusted with control of it in London. Under stress of events in Eastern Europe the Governments of France and of Great Britain pledged themselves to the despatch of 150,000 troops to Salonika, and with large drafts made upon the forces under Sir Ian Hamilton in fulfilment of this promise, all hope of any spectacular success in the neighbourhood of the Dardanelles was for the time being abandoned.

In London the Dardanelles Committee gave place to a smaller body, which came to be known as the War Committee, charged by the Prime Minister with the duty of co-ordinating and supervising operations not in the Eastern Mediterranean alone, but in all the different theatres of war. To the question what should now be done with the troops still entrenched on the rugged slopes of the Gallipoli Peninsular, the War Committee, on which Lord Curzon found no place, at once addressed itself. Military opinion, though

not unanimous, was on the whole in favour of partial evacuation, advising the abandonment of Suvla and Anzac but the retention of Helles.

To this course, when recommended by the War Committee to the Cabinet, Lord Curzon took strong exception. "We are to be asked in Cabinet to-morrow," he wrote on November 23rd, "(1) to evacuate Gallipoli; (2) to hang on to Salonika; (3) to concentrate on Egypt. I am so anxious and miserable about this policy that I shall raise a debate about it—in which I hope that you may, if you agree, lend support." [1] At the discussion on November the 24th, he undertook in the event of the Cabinet agreeing to a brief postponement of their decision to present a case in writing. He was as good as his word. Within twenty-four hours he had drawn up an elaborate presentation of the case against evacuation, covering a dozen printed pages. With his accustomed skill he had analysed the military evidence, showing that even on purely military grounds there was no large balance of opinion in favour of retreat; pitting against such military arguments as had been advanced the grave political and moral considerations which weighed heavily in the scale against a policy of withdrawal; and painting a graphic and moving picture of the horror of the final scene which must inevitably be enacted if the estimates of the probable losses which had been placed before them by every military authority who had been consulted, proved to be even approximately correct.

> "I ask my colleagues to picture the situation, and I wish to draw it in no impressionist colours, but as it must in all probability actually arise. In the case of all three positions, the evacuation and the final scenes will be enacted at night. Our guns will continue firing until the last moment, notably those on or near to the beaches, but the trenches will have been taken one by one, and a moment must come when a *sauve qui peut* takes place, and when a disorganised crowd will press in despairing tumult on to the shore and into the boats. Shells will be falling and bullets ploughing their way into this mass of retreating humanity. On the water the motor lighters and

[1] Letter to Mr., afterwards Sir, Austen Chamberlain.

launches and row boats will be coming to and fro, and doing what they can. Conceive the crowding into the boats of thousands of half-crazy men, the swamping of craft, the nocturnal panic, the agony of the wounded, the hecatombs of the slain. It requires no imagination to create a scene that, when it is told, will be burned into the hearts and consciences of the British people for generations to come. What will they say of those who have brought about this supreme and hideous disaster?

Even supposing that a British commander were willing (as he might, in such conditions, very excusably be) to save the lives of his men by surrender—though probably no British commander would do this until the end was drawing nigh and fighting was about to be replaced by wholesale slaughter—can we be sure that an eastern enemy, intoxicated by triumph and maddened by blood, would stay their hands? Is it not more likely that there would ensue one of the bloodiest episodes in the history of mankind?

A parallel exists in the ancient world. Can any student of the history of Greece forget the Syracusan expedition of the ill-fated Nicias? Read the following passage from Grote:

'In this manner the whole army presently became one scene of clamour and confusion wherein there was neither command nor obedience, nor could anyone discern what was passing. The light of the moon rendered objects and figures generally visible, without being sufficient to discriminate friend from foe. The beaten Athenians, thrown back upon their comrades, were in many cases mistaken for enemies and slain. Disorder and panic presently ended in a general flight. The Athenians hurried back by the same roads which they had ascended; but these roads were found too narrow for terrified fugitives, and many of them threw away their arms in order to scramble or jump down the cliffs, in which most of them perished.'

This was one of many incidents in the Athenian disaster. It would be multiplied many-fold by the conditions and implements of modern warfare and by the nature of the terrain

in Gallipoli. 'Nor can I forbear from pointing out to my colleagues the prodigious effect that was exercised by the above catastrophe, not merely upon the destiny of Athens, but upon the entire Eastern world."[1]

He concluded with an impassioned appeal to them to pause before coming to a decision and to weigh carefully the considerations which he had placed before them, remembering that the decision which they were about to take would be one of the most momentous in British history and that each one of them would have to justify himself to his countrymen and to posterity for what might turn out to be an indelible blot upon the British name.

Military opinion, however, was hardening in favour of evacuation. To the advice tendered by General Monro who had been sent out to take supreme command of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, was now added that of Lord Kitchener himself. No one had been more shocked than Lord Kitchener when General Monro's recommendation in favour of evacuation had been received. On November the 3rd, he had telegraphed to General Birdwood his objection—"I absolutely refuse to sign orders for evacuation which I think would be the gravest disaster and would condemn a large percentage of our men to death or imprisonment." On the following day he had left London for the scene of action, and on his return had explained to the Cabinet the reasons which had led him to change the opinion which he had formerly held and to recommend withdrawal. A decision in this sense was accordingly taken and, on December the 20th and January the 8th, the evacuation first of Anzac and Suvla and then of Helles was effected, contrary to all expectations, with negligible losses. That an operation, which in the opinion of every competent authority must be attended with losses amounting to from thirty to fifty per cent. of the entire force concerned, should have been carried through with scarcely any loss at all, constitutes a feat unparalleled in the annals of warfare.

Yet relief at this unexpectedly successful outcome of the operation did not reconcile Lord Curzon to the decision that had been taken.

[1]Note written for the Cabinet on November 25th, 1915.

"This operation (the evacuation of Helles)," he wrote more than a year later, "was carried out with scarcely inferior success on the 8th of January, and the last page was turned down of one of the most tragic, though heroic chapters of English history. Although the two-fold and final withdrawal from Gallipoli was thus accomplished and was generally acquiesced in by the public, I remain of the opinion that it was as great an error as any of the earlier blunders of the Dardanelles campaign. In my judgment persistence, if scientifically conducted, might still have led to victory; and this view I know to be shared by some of the best naval and military authority that was engaged."[1]

[1]Note on the Dardanelles Operations, drawn up by Lord Curzon for the Cabinet, on March 10th, 1917.

CHAPTER VIII

COMPULSION, SHIPPING CONTROL AND THE AIR BOARD

1915-1917

THE problem of Gallipoli was not the only one that gravely exercised the minds of those who had joined Mr. Asquith's Government in the summer of 1915. There was the question of man power which suddenly loomed up large and menacing against a background of conflicting opinion and divided counsels. During the early days of the war the difficulty had not been to secure men in adequate numbers for the army; but to train and equip those who flocked to the colours. To this end machinery had been improvised with extraordinary success. The six divisions of the British expeditionary force, which had proceeded to France in August 1914, proved to be the spear-head of an army unprecedented in the long annals of British military history, and, indeed, undreamed of in their wildest flights of imagination by previous British Ministers for War. Already thirty-five divisions were in the field, while behind them were an equal number filling the camps which had sprung up like mushrooms in a night all over the country.

But by the summer of 1915, a stage had been reached at which it was realised that the very success which had attended the improvisation of this vast army was going to be responsible for a further problem—that of keeping this new and unforeseen Colossus in existence. The wastage of war had to be made good; and already the extravagant wastage in the field was outrunning the renewals from home. The war was becoming a war of attrition; and to some at least it was becoming clear that, unless the most economical use was made of the man power of the nation, there was imminent danger

of defeat from pure exhaustion. Great Britain had never, of course, been organised for such a war, though a few leading men—and prominent among them, as we have seen, Lord Curzon—had pictured dimly to themselves the possibility of tremendous and wholly unexampled drafts being made on the manhood of the nation, and had done their best to prepare their countrymen for it.

Lord Roberts who had organised and led the campaign in favour of National Service was dead; but Lord Curzon and others who had given him whole-hearted support in Parliament and upon the platform now renewed their efforts within the walls of the Council Room. On July the 11th, Lord Curzon referred to the difficulties in which he found himself in a letter to Lord Lamington—"The majority of the Cabinet is strongly anti-compulsion, and we should have split up by forcing that issue now. K. is against it because he wants to get the glory of winning the war throughout. But he won't." Whether Lord Curzon was right in his diagnosis of the cause of Lord Kitchener's reluctance to support conscription is of little importance. What was of importance was the fact that Lord Kitchener, who could undoubtedly have carried the Cabinet and the country with him had he given a lead in the matter, remained silent, morose and uncertain.

As the days wore on and nothing was done, Lord Curzon found the uncertainty of the situation increasingly trying. "May I add," he wrote at the end of a letter to the Prime Minister early in August, "that before very long I—if no other—must bring up the question of compulsory service and seek a decision from the Cabinet? The position of myself and some others—holding the views that we do—is not easy, and if we allow the matter to be definitely shelved, might become intolerable." The matter was accordingly faced. "We are discussing in Cabinet the different questions to which you allude," he told Lord Lamington a little later, "and I believe, myself, that those with whom I act, though in the numerical minority, will ultimately prevail. But, of course, we are told that compulsion instead of saving our finances will ultimately ruin them!"

The divisions in the Cabinet were unfortunately reflected in the controversy which sprang up over the question of man power outside. With the formation of the Coalition Government a vigo-

rous campaign in favour of compulsion, led by *The Times*, had met with fierce opposition from leading organs of the Radical party. And with public opinion divided and irresolute the Government had been slow to act. In July legislation authorising the institution of a National Register was passed. Even this modest advance in the direction of a more scientific organisation of the man power of the nation was attacked in some quarters, on the ground that it was a cloak under cover of which the conscriptionists in the Cabinet were preparing to force compulsion upon the country. And this suspicion gave rise to a hostile demonstration at the Trades Union Congress which met in London in September.

Discussion in England, however, was powerless to stay the rapid progress of events in France ; and against the arguments of the anti-compulsionists had to be set the inexorable logic of the losses of Loos. And convinced, in face of the rapidly increasing drain upon such reserves as were available, that further delay would be fatal, Lord Curzon invited those with whom he was acting in the matter to a conference at his house to consider their position. This gathering proved to be the turning point in the controversy. With the approval of the Prime Minister, Lord Derby was invited by the War Office in October to assume direction of a far reaching scheme of recruitment, based on the information which the National Register had provided. No attempt was made to disguise the meaning of this fresh appeal to the patriotism of the people. It was frankly admitted to be the last effort on behalf of voluntary service ; and in November Mr. Asquith gave a pledge to the married men who came forward in response to it, that they would not be called upon to fulfil their undertaking until the unmarried men who were eligible had first been enrolled. It seemed that this pledge could only mean that, in the event of any considerable number of eligible single men failing to come forward voluntarily to attest under Lord Derby's scheme, compulsion would be applied to ensure their doing so.

Yet opposition in the Cabinet was far from dead ; and though by the middle of December it was clear that the Derby scheme had failed—it was estimated that 650,000 single men of military age remained unattested—Lord Curzon was still in doubt as to the issue.

He was faced, indeed, during the closing days of the year with the necessity of taking one of those fateful decisions which throughout his life he had found so difficult. In the event of the anti-compulsionists in the Cabinet carrying the day, should he sever his connection with the Government? There is good reason to suppose that he would have done so. On December the 27th, he received from the Prime Minister an intimation that it was the King's intention to confer upon him a Knighthood of the Garter. To few men would the refusal of such an honour have been harder. Not only did it make an almost irresistible appeal to his passion for the trappings of life, of which something has been said in earlier chapters, but it constituted an exceptional recognition of public service which had lost nothing of its attraction in his eyes because on his return from India, when it had been secretly but fiercely coveted, it had been withheld. Yet now that it was actually within his grasp, he seriously contemplated the prospect of having to forego it. On the very day on which he received the Prime Minister's letter, a Compulsory Service Bill came before the Cabinet for consideration. The discussion on it was inconclusive and the Cabinet rose without coming to a decision. Courtesy demanded a reply to the Prime Minister's letter; the irresolution of the Cabinet left the nature of the reply in doubt. Lord Curzon temporised; he proffered a request, which he hoped would not in the circumstances be regarded as improper, that he might be permitted to defer giving a definite answer for a few days—"when we shall all know more exactly how we stand."

Though the Cabinet had hesitated, the issue was not left long in doubt. Lord Curzon's name appeared in the Honour's List on New Year's day; on the same day it became known that Sir John Simon had left the Government; four days later a Compulsory Military Service Bill was introduced by the Prime Minister in fulfilment of his pledge to the married men, given in the House of Commons on November the 2nd, and on January the 27th the measure became law. Lord Curzon's relief was considerable. "It is a great thing to have dragged this Government over the fence of compulsion," he wrote on January the 3rd. "When I joined it in May I was the only avowed compulsionist in the Cabinet. Now we

have a majority. That is a compensation for staying on which has often been irksome and mortifying to a degree."[1]

Towards the end of January 1916, it became known that Lord Curzon had at last been given definite administrative work of the highest importance. This was the direction of the work of the Shipping Control Committee which came into existence under pressure of the demands which were being made on British shipping, not only by competing interests, military and commercial, in Great Britain itself, but by the growing necessities of her Allies. The difficulty of providing adequately for all these requirements had become steadily greater during the year 1915 as the toll of the available supplies taken by enemy raiders, submarines and mines increased.

The problem, with which the Committee found themselves confronted, was similar to that of the Israelites in Egypt—how to make bricks without straw. Their instructions were to decide on the allocation of British ships to the essential requirements both of the Allies and of the United Kingdom, and to make representations to the Cabinet with regard to the tonnage required for naval and military purposes. These terms of reference seemed to predicate an available margin of tonnage to be allocated, whereas no margin in fact existed. On the contrary, a careful comparison made by the Committee in the form of a balance sheet, between the total demands made and the resources available from which to meet them, showed an actual deficit amounting at a conservative estimate to 3,000,000 tons. And the first problem which the Committee set themselves to solve was that of converting this alarming deficit into a surplus.

They quickly came to the conclusion that there was only one way in which this could be done, and that was by restricting drastically the quantity of goods imported into the country. And as a result of a careful examination of the question from this point of view, they recommended that, for a period of three months from March the 31st, 1916, the import of all commodities other than those comprised in certain clearly defined categories, should be definitely prohibited. The proposal was certainly a bold one and the reception accorded to it, if not encouraging, was not altogether unexpected. The Board of Trade considered the administrative and

[1]Letter to Lord Lamington.

political difficulties in the way of so heroic a remedy insuperable, and declined to adopt it—a decision which was communicated to his Committee by Lord Curzon from a bed of sickness :

> " I am liable to severe back pains," he explained in writing to the Secretary, " and I had one of these seizures last night which will keep me in bed for a few days. I saw Runciman yesterday . . . As I expected, the Board of Trade are quite unable to accept the bold and extensive prohibition of imports which we have proposed. It would involve us in immediate rows of a desperate nature, not merely with trades and interests in this country as well as with the War Office, Munitions Department, etc. ; but also with our Allies abroad. The calculations in our draft, which were based upon the hypothetical acceptance of this scheme, fall very largely to the ground." [1]

In these circumstances the Committee fell back for the time being upon a number of other devices for easing the situation, chief among them being the acceleration of merchant shipbuilding ; the felling of timber in Great Britain for home requirements in place of importation from abroad ; the obtaining of stone and timber in France itself to meet the huge local demand for such things there ; and insistence upon the more economical use of tonnage by the naval and military authorities. As a result of their exertions in these directions some improvement was effected. The Admiralty, after discussion with Lord Curzon, agreed to release a number of shipbuilding yards and marine engineering works for commercial requirements ; and by May, in spite of increased demands by the War Office in connection with the Salonika expedition, it had been found possible, as a result of the more economical employment of the tonnage allocated, to release from naval and military service over 130 ships of the mercantile marine.

All these devices, however, were little more than palliatives of a desperate evil, and while Great Britain was struggling to meet the necessities of her own case, the Governments of the allied coun-

[1] Letter to Mr. Clement Jones, C.B., to whom I am indebted for much information concerning the working of the Shipping Control Committee.

tries, scarcely conscious of the extent of the aid already being rendered to them, clamoured loudly and continuously for more. So difficult was the position that Lord Curzon thought it desirable to explain it to the public.

> "Let me point out," he said in the House of Lords on May the 3rd, "that we are rendering precisely the same services to the Allies as we are to our own people. Our ships are conveying supplies of food, coal, grain, timber, raw material for munitions, munitions themselves, to all the allied Governments. The assistance which we are rendering to them is on a scale unprecedented in the history of any war—a scale unsuspected, I believe, by the allied Governments whom we are assisting, and practically unknown, except to experts, in this country. But for British shipping, there would not now be pouring into France, Russia and Italy the food and munitions which are necessary for the efficient conduct by them of the war. . . . While I am speaking about the services to the Allies let me, in no spirit of vainglory, but as a simple statement of fact, deal in rather more mathematical terms with the precise service we are rendering. I will not give the exact number of ocean-going steamers—that is steamers above 1,600 tons—which at the present moment we possess, but I may say that the total number is between 3,000 and 4,000. Out of that total we have dedicated over 500 of these ships to the exclusive use of France, Italy and Russia. . . These 500 ships are a subtraction from the total shipping of this country, every ton of which is really required for our own service. Let the House be quite clear about that. We gladly give it. We wish we could give more. My Committee is daily confronted with the difficult task of having to refuse to give more. We take no credit to ourselves for what we have given, but at least let our services be acknowledged and be known."

Faced with these ever expanding demands, Lord Curzon became more strongly convinced than ever that a fundamental necessity of the situation was an enforced and much more drastic reduction of non-essential commodities imported into the country, and he and

his Committee continued to work to this end. By the close of the year 1916, competent opinion put the probable deficiencies of carrying power during the ensuing weeks at 500,000 tons of imports a month ; and almost the last act of the Shipping Control Committee, in the shape in which it had hitherto existed, was to urge once more upon the Government the vital importance of securing by the prohibition of non-essential imports, the carriage of essential supplies. This action was taken at a moment of rapid political change which was to have its influence upon Lord Curzon's own position in the Government. Mr. Asquith's Administration fell ; and Lord Curzon became a member of the War Cabinet—the small Committee of Public Safety by which Mr. Lloyd George, who succeeded to the Premiership, conducted the affairs of the nation from this time on until the end of the war and the conclusion of the Peace Conference. The Shipping Control Committee became merged after Lord Curzon's resignation of the Chairmanship in a new Ministry of Shipping ; but the principle for which the Committee had fought so strenuously had by then won the day. On December the 21st, 1916, within a few days of the formation of the new Government, a Cabinet Committee under Lord Curzon's chairmanship was appointed " to consider and report on the question of the restriction of imports." By the middle of February the Committee had submitted to the War Cabinet a programme of restriction involving a reduction of 6,000,000 tons of shipping a year on the actual imports of 1916 ; within a week the approval of the Cabinet had been obtained ; and on March the 31st, 1917, the consent of the Dominions and the Foreign Governments affected having been secured, the long list of the prohibitions agreed upon was published in the *Gazette*.

The Shipping Control Committee had realised from the first how much they owed to Lord Curzon's administrative ability and prestige, and when, in the early summer of 1916, it was rumoured that his talents and driving force were likely to be required elsewhere, they passed a Resolution urging him not to leave them, even if he felt obliged to give a portion of his time to other matters, and offering to relieve him as far as possible of routine work. Lord Curzon was genuinely pleased.

"I desire to express to the Committee my sincere sense of the honour they have done me in passing the Resolution which I have just received. My natural inclination would have been to resign a position to which I do so little justice. But if the Committee think that I can further their cause by taking up their important cases before the War Committee, I will gladly stay on until the Prime Minister or public outcry turns me out. In the meantime I am most grateful to the Committee for their willingness to add to their own labours in order to spare me. My Air Board meets every Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoon and renders it impossible for me to be absent on those days."[1]

For some time past the administration of the Air Service had been a source of dissatisfaction. There was, in fact, no separate Air Service at all, the army and the navy each employing air corps as auxiliary branches of their own. With a view to prevent overlapping and waste a Co-ordinating Committee under the chairmanship of Lord Derby had been appointed in February 1916, to adjust relations between the War Office and the Admiralty in respect of supplies for the Air Service. Lord Curzon, who had made a study of the question, had condemned the Committee from the start as a perfectly useless half-measure; had pointed out in a Note drawn up for the War Committee and subsequently circulated to the Cabinet, that such a Committee would lack authority, would spend its time trying to arbitrate between the different Departments, would be powerless to evolve a policy or help materially to end the war; and had boldly advocated the creation of an Air Department with an Air Minister at its head. He possessed the vision which enabled him to grasp the immense potentialities of aerial warfare. He regarded the immediate organisation of the air forces of the country for long distance flights against the enemy as one of the most imperative demands of the situation. He brushed aside as irrelevant all discussion of the ethics of reprisals. No Englishman wanted to kill innocent men, women or children. But they did want to bombard, injure, and destroy German military stations, camps, railway centres, arsenals, factories and workshops.

[1] Letter to Mr. Clement Jones, C.B., May 25th, 1916.

He was convinced that, with proper organisation, it should long since have been possible to have had an air fleet over Essen. "That" he declared, "would produce a greater commotion in Germany than the capture of many miles of German trenches." But the potentialities of aerial attack would never materialise without a proper exercise of authority, initiative, unity of action and control; and he saw little hope of these qualities being displayed by a Committee composed in the main of representatives of the War Office and the Admiralty, since there could be no real initiative where there was confused and uncertain responsibility.

His forecast was an accurate one. Its terms of reference were too narrow to enable the Committee to decide any question of policy, and it possessed neither the executive power nor the authority which might have enabled it to bridge the fundamental disagreement which existed between two distinct branches of what should have been one service, each having its own organisation, *esprit de corps* and aspirations. After a few weeks of futile endeavour Lord Derby therefore resigned; and Lord Curzon renewed his representations to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet.

He again urged the creation of a new Department; but since he was aware of the doubts which the Prime Minister harboured about the proposed Air Ministry, fortified as such doubts were by the steady opposition of both navy and army, he put forward as a possible alternative a less revolutionary measure. Taking the Shipping Control Committee as his model, he suggested the appointment of an Air Board which should be charged with the duty of formulating a policy and of advising the Government in due course for or against the creation of an Air Ministry. He regarded it as essential that, in the event of either the Admiralty or the War Office declining to act on the advice of the Board, the President should be at liberty to refer the matter to the War Committee. The Prime Minister anxious to do something, but fearful of doing too much, accepted the compromise, and in May the new Air Board with Lord Curzon at its head came into being. Apart from its President the Board consisted of two naval and two military representatives, and of two civilians, Lord Sydenham and Major Baird, M.P., who spoke for it in the House of Commons.

The Board set to work with the energy to be expected of any body functioning under Lord Curzon's direction and control. But the old conditions which had rendered Lord Derby's Committee impotent remained unaltered; the two branches of the air force were still under the control of the War Office and the Admiralty; and though the Air Board was invested with greater authority than the Co-ordinating Committee had been, it yet lacked the full power of compelling either Department to carry out its recommendations. The powers delegated to it by the War Committee were not those of a plenipotentiary—in the event of disagreement it could only refer matters back to the War Committee for decision.

When putting forward his suggestion for an Air Board, Lord Curzon had pointed out that in the analogous case of the Shipping Control Committee questions of the first importance were constantly referred to it by the Foreign Office, the Board of Trade and other Departments, not merely for examination but for *decision*; and he had added that unless the constitution of an Air Board was welcome to the War Office and the Admiralty, and unless both those Departments would agree to facilitate a task which must in any case be "most difficult and often odious . . . it would be futile to set it up and no sane man would be found to accept the chair."[1] A very brief experience of the working of the new Board satisfied him that, far from its operations being welcome to the Admiralty, they were viewed by that Department with suspicion and dislike. The fact of the matter was that during the opening days of the war the Admiralty, under the enterprising direction of Mr. Winston Churchill, had strayed into strange fields of activity. Among other miscellaneous and, as some thought, incongruous tasks, it had been charged with, or, at any rate, had assumed responsibility for, the aerial defence of London. There were in reality better reasons for this allocation of duties than were apparent to the casual eye. The strain upon the Admiralty due to war expansion, though sufficiently great, was less severe than it was upon the War Office; and their intelligence system was better adapted for obtaining warning of the approach of air-craft across the seas. It was not altogether surprising, therefore, that when a new body came into

[1] Memorandum submitted to the Cabinet, April 16th, 1916.

being which seemed to be arrogating to itself wide powers in connection with aerial warfare generally, the Admiralty should be at little pains to disguise the fact that they resented its interference in matters which they regarded as lying in a special sense within their own province.

For five months Lord Curzon strove to effect the purpose for which the Air Board had been set up, and at the end of that period he recorded his failure in an elaborate Report to the Prime Minister and the War Committee. "I am in now for my big fight for the expansion of the Air Board," he wrote on October the 25th. "It is really a fight with the Admiralty, and if my proposals, in which my colleagues Lord Sydenham and Major Baird entirely concur, are not acepted by the War Committee (our military colleagues also entirely accept them) we shall resign."[1] The Report was written by himself in consultation with, and with the approval of, his two civilian colleagues. No part was played in its compilation by the representatives of the War Office and the Admiralty who had seats upon the Board, since their official position would have rendered it difficult for them, in Lord Curzon's opinion, to pass judgment upon many of the points which it would be necessary to raise. By far the greater part of the thirty pages of print covered by the Report was devoted, in fact, to an elaboration of the main conclusion to which, as a result of the experience of the past five months, Lord Curzon and his civilian colleagues had been forced. This conclusion was stated and re-stated, buttressed with evidence and supported by illustration; presented to the reader, in short, with the eloquence and skill which never failed Lord Curzon when framing an indictment or arguing a case. In its simplest shape it was formulated as follows—that "no expansion of the work of the Air Board, no complete fulfilment of the charge with which it was entrusted, and no adequate provision for the urgent necessities of the future were possible so long as the Admiralty adopted its present attitude towards the Air Board, and so long as the administration of that branch of the Air Service which was in the hands of the Admiralty was conducted on the present lines."

The Admiralty had passed under the control of a man who was

[1] Letter to Mrs. Duggan.

not one whit behind the President of the Air Board in dialectical skill; and Mr. Balfour, while disclaiming either the time or the inclination for controversy, thought that it would hardly be respectful either to the authors of the Report or to his colleagues on the War Committee, if he were to let it pass wholly without comment. Of the Air Board's performances of which they had little to say themselves, he had still less to write. But to do them justice they were much more interested in abusing the Admiralty than in praising themselves.

> "I do not suppose that in the whole history of the country any Government Department has ever indulged so recklessly in the luxury of inter-departmental criticism. The temptation no doubt has often existed; but hitherto it has been more or less successfully resisted. In the case of the Air Board, however, the ardour of youth and the consciousness of superior abilities have completely broken through the ordinary barriers of self-control. The Army also is mentioned, but only for the purpose of artistic contrast. It is the virtuous apprentice, the lustre of whose shining merits serves but to darken the shadows in the character of his wicked rival."

Lord Curzon's indictment of the Admiralty for their alleged failure to deal more effectively with Zeppelin raids and to appreciate the value of lighter-than-air machines as an adjunct of naval warfare itself, was lightly dismissed—"imaginary history is very easy to write, and quite impossible to refute . . "

This reply by the First Lord of the Admiralty elicited a rejoinder from the President of the Air Board; and for a time the gloom which overhung a domestic controversy, in itself deplorable, was lighted up for those who of necessity looked on while their chiefs monopolised the stage, by the sparks which flew from the clash of steel upon steel as the rapiers met in thrust and parry. It is impossible to say what would have been the outcome of the controversy had Lord Curzon remained President of the Air Board and Mr. Balfour First Lord of the Admiralty. Neither of them was, however, destined to play a leading part in the final stages of the controversy,

for at this juncture the tide of affairs took a turn which swept both of them to other shores. On December the 5th, Mr. Asquith resigned, and Mr. Lloyd George became Prime Minister. Mr. Balfour moved from the Admiralty to the Foreign Office and Lord Curzon became Lord President of the Council, Leader of the House of Lords and a member of the small War Cabinet, which was, henceforth, to devote itself unremittingly to the conduct of the war. It was, however, Lord Curzon's view which in the end prevailed ; for in January 1918 the changes for which he had from the first contended were brought about. An Air Ministry was created which in course of time acquired a position analogous to that of the War Office, with an Air Council corresponding to the Army Council, in control of a single service formed by the amalgamation of the Naval and Military wings of the Air Force. Thus was his judgment vindicated and his importunity justified.

CHAPTER IX

FLANDERS, PALESTINE AND MESOPOTAMIA

1917

From this time onwards Lord Curzon had little reason to complain of lack of work. Between December 1916, when Mr. Lloyd George's Government took office, and November 1918, when hostilities on the main battle areas were brought to a close, the War Cabinet of which he was throughout a member, held over five hundred meetings. Normally it met daily in the morning and sometimes in the afternoon and evening as well. It became the brain of the Empire to which the daily developments of the war on land, on sea, under the sea and in the air, together with the problems to which each fresh move gave rise, were continuously communicated for information, consideration and decision. And to problems of a strictly military character were added questions no less bewildering in their complexity nor vital in their consequences, affecting the Imperial and Foreign relations of the Country and the economic and social organisation of her peoples.

So great, so complex and so continuous a flow of work necessitated a considerable departure from the methods of transacting business hitherto followed by British Cabinets. The preparation of agenda and the maintenance of a record and Minutes of the proceedings were found to be essential if the mass of business which came before the War Cabinet was to be properly dealt with, and these innovations entailed the creation of a Secretariat with a highly competent and responsible officer at its head.

Lord Curzon applauded all such changes and, as a result of eigh-

teen months experience of the working of the new system, gave it as his deliberate opinion that when the history of these days was written, it would be found that they had left a not inconsiderable mark upon the constitutional development of the country. He paid a glowing tribute to the officer—Sir Maurice Hankey, G.C.B.—who as Secretary to the Cabinet was charged with a task of no ordinary difficulty and of immense responsibility. "That distinguished officer by his ability, his industry, his knowledge of affairs and his unfailing tact, has really been far more responsible than any individual for what I claim to be the successful working of the system, and when history is written he will deserve his own niche in the temple which records the builders of our national Constitution."[1] Of a kindred innovation, namely, the elaborate Private Secretariat which Mr. Lloyd George added to the machinery of government for his own particular convenience, and which, owing to its location in the grounds of No. 10 Downing Street, came to be known familiarly as "the Garden Suburb," Lord Curzon had a different story to tell. For he was to discover by personal experience the embarrassment to which a Foreign Minister might be subjected by a Prime Minister with a highly staffed Secretariat at his disposal, who took an active and sometimes independent part in directing the foreign policy of the Country. This was, however, the development of a later date; and so far as the organisation presided over by Sir Maurice Hankey was concerned, he appreciated to the full the method which an efficient Secretariat introduced into the procedure of the Cabinet.

Lord Curzon was by temperament and by experience better equipped, perhaps, than some of his colleagues for assimilating the contents of the never ending stream of papers which flowed in upon them. On the other hand, the habit which he had acquired in India of conscientiously perusing all the documents in a file rather than rely upon a summary prepared by someone else, imposed on him a ceaseless and tremendous strain. At the end of an exhausting day he would return from a dinner party or some official engagement to sit up far into the night, poring over the mass of papers which had accumulated during the day; and it was rare, indeed, if those

[1]Speech in the House of Lords, June 19th, 1918.

concerned did not receive their boxes back the following morning with a clear Minute of instructions written in Lord Curzon's own hand.

Nor was this all, for membership of the War Cabinet carried with it, automatically, membership of the Imperial War Cabinet—that gathering of statesmen from the Dominions and India which met for a Session, once during the year 1917 and twice during the following twelve months. He also served as chairman of many Cabinet Committees, was Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Lords. "I am much obliged to you," he wrote to Lord Crewe on December the 10th, 1916, "for telling me about the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. How I am to do all these things with War Committee sitting daily, often twice, I do not know."

The burden of these days would, indeed, have weighed heavily upon a man in the full vigour of life and in the enjoyment of perfect health. Lord Curzon was still short of sixty; but he was called upon to wage constant warfare against physical pain which, with advancing years, grew steadily in the frequency and the intensity of its attack. "I have not cared to publish my afflictions," he wrote about this time, "but I have been in almost constant pain for the past six weeks."[1] Something of the struggle was to be gathered from his appearance. Even entering a dining room he walked haltingly and with a stick. He retained much of the freshness of colour which had always been so striking a feature of his appearance and in his younger days had been the subject of Bœotian humour on the part of his contemporaries. But the hard grip of the lips, the mute but unmistakable message of the eye, the contraction of the brow above the nose and the slant of the eyebrows giving him at times an almost Mephistophelian expression, all told of prolonged and bitter conflict, waged with iron resolution, against the infirmities of the flesh.

Yet Lord Curzon was, perhaps, happier now than he had been at any time since his return from India. To be at the heart of things; to have his finger on the pulse of great events; to play a dominant part in guiding and determining the destinies not merely of indi-

[1] Letter to Lord Lamington.

THE MARCHIONESS CURZON OF KEDLESTON

From a drawing by SARGENT

viduals but of nations, to be moulding the material of which history —and what history!—would be made—these were the things that he loved. It was thus that, in those far-off days when he had stepped across the threshold of the world on leaving Oxford, he had dimly pictured himself as he projected his gaze into the mazy mirror of the future. And for a time the enthusiasms of the past burned once more with something of the brightness of their earlier flame. Moreover, there came into his life at this time the joy which he was capable of deriving in such abundant measure from that intimate companionship to which he had now for so long been a stranger, but for which it was not in his nature not to crave. "When you read before long in the papers," he wrote on December the 7th, 1916, "that I am going to marry Mrs. Duggan, pray believe that I am doing a wise thing which will make us both happy and brighten my often desolate life."[1]

His house in London became once more a centre of brilliant social life; it also became the scene of fateful and historic gatherings. Somehow or other the gaunt spectre of war which trailed carnage and infinite misery across the face of the world, must be laid. By some means or other the long, wasting months of stagnant warfare in the sodden and blood-soaked trenches, which drew a ghastly furrow half way across Europe, must be brought to an end. And the problem, which was debated with increasing urgency and anxiety as winter melted into spring and spring blossomed cheerlessly into summer in 1917, was that of giving to the struggle once more the character of a war of movement which it had long since lost and seemed powerless to regain. The attempts which had been made at intervals from the spring of 1915 onwards had been costly beyond all previous computation and grievously inconclusive. Yet, when faced with this supreme problem, human ingenuity seemed bankrupt and could suggest no other way of smashing the yoke under which the Western world lay groaning and so of freeing Europe from the nightmare in which she had become ensnared. And it was at a dinner party given by Lord Curzon that those charged with the responsibility of planning a further effort, came to decisions of momentous consequence. "We have now had Haig

[1]Letter to Lord Lamington.

and Robertson before us for two days," he wrote on June the 21st, "and we have to take decisions for the autumn and winter which may affect, indeed must affect, the whole future conduct and perhaps the ultimate issue of the war."[1] Far into the night of June the 20th, the members of the Committee—Mr. Lloyd George, Lord Curzon, Mr. Bonar Law, Lord Milner, General Smuts and Colonel Hankey (the Secretary)—sat in earnest conclave, first on the terrace overlooking the Mall and later on in the house itself.

> "Last night my dinner to the Committee went off very well. . . . After dinner we adjourned to the terrace to embark upon the great discussion. But after three quarters of an hour the wind drove us in and we adjourned to your boudoir where the guests showed a complimentary but uninstructed interest in the pictures. The pow-wow lasted till 12.30 a.m. and sent me to bed quite worn out."[2]

The formal decision which resulted in the Flanders Campaign of the autumn of 1917 was taken and recorded elsewhere. But it was at 1 Carlton House Terrace, on the night of June the 20th, that the die may be said to have been cast. The decision to be taken was a sufficiently difficult one. The summer of 1917 found the French forces weary and disheartened and the French people sullen and depressed. And it was abundantly clear that in any large offensive, which might be undertaken during the remaining months of the year, the French army must be left out of account as a serious factor in the calculations. On the other hand it was equally plain that the very state of the French *moral* demanded something more inspiriting than a passive defence on the part of her Allies. In these circumstances two alternative plans were open to consideration. The first to be examined by the Committee was an attack in force on the Italian front with a view to dealing the Austrian army a crushing blow, to be followed by the capture of Trieste. It was thought that if this plan was carried through successfully, Austria might then be detached from Germany by the offer of a separate peace. An admitted difficulty in the way of the project was the Italian shortage

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon. [2] *Ibid.*

of heavy artillery ; and it was recognised that for its successful prosecution it would be necessary to concentrate a force of 300 to 400 British or French guns on the Isonzo front in support of the Italian advance. With such support General Cadorna was prepared to make the attempt.

The alternative to this plan was a thrust in force by the whole British army in Flanders with a view, not only to harassing and wearing down the resistance of the strongest of the enemy Powers, but to effecting the subsidiary, but by no means unimportant, object of sweeping the German forces from the Belgian coast. The anxiety of the Admiralty to see Zeebrugge and Ostend cleared of enemy submarines and destroyers before the winter, weighed heavily with the Committee against doubts which they entertained as to the ability of the British army to carry to a successful issue the entire series of operations involved in the ambitious plan of campaign drawn up by Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig. Even so, it was not until they had passed in review and submitted to expert military opinion all possible objections to the plan, that they decided to recommend its adoption in preference to the offensive on the Italian front. On June the 25th, five days after the fateful dinner party at Lord Curzon's house, Sir Douglas Haig was authorised to proceed with his preparations. But it was not until after further prolonged and anxious consideration that orders for the commencement of the offensive were finally issued. At the same time it was decided that plans for the transport of guns and ammunition to the Italian front should be accurately worked out, so that, in the event of the advance in Flanders being brought to a premature standstill, a blow might still be struck at the Austrian army on the Isonzo.

The doubts and fears with which the Committee had been assailed were unhappily more than justified by events. On neither front were the expectations of the Allies realised. On the Southern front it was not the Italians, but a composite Austro-German force assembled behind the Austrian lines with complete secrecy, that broke through the defence, and effected the biggest surprise of the War since trench warfare had set in. In the course of these disastrous operations the Allies lost no less than 2,300 guns and a quarter of a million prisoners. French and British reinforcements were

hurried to the assistance of the hard-pressed Italian army and before the end of the year were firmly established in the firing line. In Flanders no appreciable advance was made ; Zeebrugge and Ostend remained in the hands of the enemy, and it was not until a year later that the great results hoped for from the Flanders campaign, were realised.

But while Lord Curzon was necessarily preoccupied with these profoundly moving events which bulked so large upon the European stage, it must have been clear to those associated with him, that Asia had lost nothing of the fascination which she had always exercised over him. His thoughts were continually turning in the direction of those lands over which hung the unchanging glamour of the Orient ; and it was by virtue of his own intimate connection with them in the past, that he constituted himself in a special sense the custodian of British interests in the East. Whether it was a question of the extension or the blocking of a railway in the debatable lands beyond the Indian frontier ; of the future of Palestine, of Constantinople or of Cyprus ; of the aims to be pursued in Mesopotamia or Arabistan ; of the possibilities of German East Africa as a future outlet for a surplus Indian population ; of the nature and extent of the military co-operation to be sought from Japan ; of peace negotiations with Turkey or of means for making known to the Muhammadan world the real aims of British policy, as distinct from the distorted versions of it sedulously propagated by her enemies ; of the future of the new capital of India at Delhi, and not least of the concessions to be made to the Indian peoples in the way of Constitutional Reforms, Lord Curzon was equally at home, a dominant and challenging figure, approving here and condemning there, wielding with zest and with effect, in the discussion of all such questions, the varied weapons of an unusually well stocked armoury.

" As one who has had a good deal to do with the Sistan question for the last quarter of a century," he wrote in a Memorandum for the Committee of Imperial Defence in August 1916, " and has been to a large extent responsible for the Quetta-Nushki-Sistan developments both in politics, strategy and trade during that period, I may, perhaps, be permitted to say something about the latest

proposal. . ." When Viceroy of India he had himself been responsible for the construction of the railway from Quetta to Nushki; but in the circumstances then prevailing had discouraged its further extension. He did not now dissent in principle from its prolongation in the direction of the Persian frontier. But the strong strain of practical common sense which sometimes asserted itself in the very cases in which his romantic imagination might have been expected to carry him with it—his demolition of the dreams of a great trunk line from Burma into the heart of China fifteen years before was a case in point—led him to counsel a much more modest advance than had actually been proposed. He did not think that the question ought to be decided exclusively from the point of view of the existing strategical situation in Eastern Persia. There were other and more permanent considerations to be taken into account, the future of which might easily be compromised by an extension hastily decided on to meet a particular emergency, since it was in the nature of frontier railways "to go forward rather than to go back, and to substitute a larger for a smaller purpose." In place of a broad-gauge line he would suggest one of 2ft. 6in. as sufficient for all immediate requirements; and for the long extension into Persia one that would stop short at Dalbandin some distance from the Persian frontier. When the total railway expenditure of India had been cut down to £3,000,000 in consequence of the war, a proposal to spend £2,000,000, on a broad-gauge railway across the deserts of Baluchistan into Persia demanded greater justification than it had received. He would prefer to see the whole matter treated as tentative and experimental, and speed of construction the principle test. If the broad-gauge was wanted later on, conversion could be carried out without difficulty.

In another Note written for the Committee of Imperial Defence about the same time, he argued strongly against the assumption too lightly made, that the British Government were committed even in principle to the construction of a Trans-Persian Railway—a proposal which he had always regarded as highly undesirable. And he requested that his Note might be placed on record for reference whenever the matter might come up for further discussion.

Lord Curzon had, indeed, lost nothing of his trenchant ability for dissecting a proposition with which he disagreed. If there was a bubble to be pricked his was the pen with which to do the pricking. With good-humoured satire and with obvious satisfaction he would expose the hollowness of the premises on which some elaborate and showy superstructure had been built. Temptation to indulge in this seductive pastime was great when people in high places began inventing formulas to define the things for which they conceived that the nations had been fighting, or, at least, the things which it gratified them to think were to be the fruits of their having fought. " The establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish race," was the formula coined to express an aspiration of some, at any rate, of those who were ranged under the banner of the Allies. Was this an aspiration with which His Majesty's Government ought definitely to associate themselves ? By some the question was answered with an unhesitating affirmative. Lord Curzon thought they should have paused before they leapt. He wanted to know, in the first place, what was the precise meaning of the phrase " a National Home for the Jewish race in Palestine " ? And in the second place, what was the nature of the obligation which the Government of Great Britain would be assuming if they accepted the aspiration as a principle of British policy ? And, since no one seemed prepared to offer any definite explanation of the meaning of the phrase, Lord Curzon proceeded to an analysis of it himself.

A National Home for the Jewish race would seem to imply—if the words were to bear their ordinary significance—a place where the Jews could be reassembled as a nation and where they would enjoy the privileges of an independent national existence. Such at any rate must be the conception of those who spoke of the creation in Palestine of " an autonomous Jewish State " ; that was to say, a political entity composed of Jews, governed by Jews, and administered mainly in the interests of Jews. " Such a State might naturally be expected to have a capital and a form of Government and institutions of its own. It would possess the soil, or the greater part of the soil, of the country. It would take its place among the smaller nations of the earth."

Now was this a practicable ideal ? Let them consider the main

factors in the situation. It was estimated that the Jewish people numbered approximately 12,000,000 souls scattered broadcast over the face of the earth, of which number 125,000 only had been domiciled in Palestine before the war. So much for the race which was to inhabit the National Home. What of the Home itself? The land extending from Dan to Beersheba, i.e., the Palestine of the Scriptures, was, if the deserts were excluded, about the size of Wales. And it was helpful to remember when considering the question, that Wales, in spite of possessing one city of nearly 200,000 and two others of 200,000 between them, supported a population of 2,000,000 only. As compared with this, Palestine could at best claim to support a population which even before the war fell short of 700,000, and which consisted for the most part not of Jews but of Moslems. The poverty of the land had admittedly been increased by the war, since the Turks had broken up such Jewish colonies as existed, had conscripted and to a large extent destroyed the peasantry, and had reduced the small urban population to beggary. But the war had merely added to an already existing leanness. The Scriptural phrase, "a land flowing with milk and honey," had to be read in relation to the desert features of Sinai, and lost something of its picturesque charm when it was realised that the milk was that of the herds of goats that roamed the hills, and the honey the juice of the small grape that was used as a substitute for sugar.

The country, in short, was one which would require a colossal expenditure on afforestation, irrigation and restoration generally, before any considerable revival could take place—one which called for patience and prolonged toil by a people inured to agriculture. Assuming the inhabitants not to have been exterminated by the war, the nucleus of such a population would be found already in possession of the land—a mixed community of Arab, Hebrew, Canaanite, Greek and Egyptian blood.

> "They and their forefathers have occupied the country for the best part of two thousand years. They own the soil which belongs either to individual landowners or to village communities. They profess the Muhammadan faith. They will not be content either to be expropriated for Jewish immigrants,

or to act merely as hewers of wood and drawers of water to the latter."

A prodigal expenditure of money might no doubt secure the expropriation of some part of the existing population.

"But when we reflect that the existing Jewish colonies in the most favoured spots, after a prodigious outlay extending over many years, have only in a few cases as yet become self-supporting, it is clear that a long vista of anxiety, vicissitude and expense lies before those who desire to rebuild the National Home."

Nor was this all. Those whose imagination was captivated by the prospect of the establishment of a National Home for the Jewish race in Palestine, dreamed of a Jewish State with a Jewish capital at Jerusalem. Such a dream was rendered wholly incapable of realisation by the conditions of Jerusalem itself. It was a city in which too many peoples and too many religions had a passionate and permanent interest to render any such solution even dimly possible.

"The Protestant communities are vitally interested in the churches and in the country as the scene of the most sacred events in history. The Roman Catholics collect annually large sums and maintain extensive establishments at Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The Greek Orthodox Church regards the Holy Places with an almost frenzied reverence. Great pilgrimages come annually from the Slav countries and Russia. I recall a flourishing Russian monastery on Mount Tabor. The Hellenic clergy have large properties in the country. Finally, next to Mecca and Medina, Jerusalem is the most famous city of the Muhammadan faith. The Mosque of Omar, on the site of the Temple of Solomon, is one of the most hallowed of the shrines of Islam. It contains the great rock or stone, known as Haram, which is regarded with so much awe in the Moslem world that when, a few years ago, an Englishman was alleged to have been

> digging under it, the uproar spread throughout the Moslem world. It is impossible to contemplate any future in which the Muhammadans should be excluded from Jerusalem. Hebron is a site scarcely less sacred to Islam."

These then were facts which it would be folly to ignore—on the one hand a total Jewish population of twelve million ; on the other a small poverty-stricken agricultural country already occupied by a people of a different race and creed, and one which, for the reasons given, could possess no national urban centre or capital. How, out of this modest material, were they to fashion the sort of thing that must inevitably be conjured up in the minds of men by phrases such as that to which they were asked to subscribe—" His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish race "? Was it not perfectly obvious that all that they could hope to realise—assuming that the Turks were defeated and ejected from Palestine—was the establishment of some form of European Administration under which the peaceable possession of their Holy Places would be secured to Christian, Moslem and Jew respectively ; equal civil and religious rights would be guaranteed alike to Jew and Gentile, and some scheme for land purchase and the settlement of returning Jews might be undertaken ?

> " If this is Zionism there is no reason why we should not all be Zionists, and I would gladly give my adhesion to such a policy. . . . But in my judgment it is a policy very widely removed from the romantic and idealistic aspirations of many of the Zionist leaders whose literature I have studied, and, whatever it does, it will not in my judgment provide either a national, material, or even a spiritual home for any more than a very small section of the Jewish people." [1]

When, in due course, the Government made their declaration on the subject, it was accompanied by certain precautionary provisos—

[1] Note dated October 26th, 1917.

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of that object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish Communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

Farther east in the lands washed by the waters of the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers, British and Indian troops had brought two and a half years of chequered fighting to a definite issue by the capture, in March 1917, of the historic city of the Abbasid Caliphs. And with Baghdad in British hands the future of Mesopotamia at once became a question of something more than purely academic interest. It was natural enough, in view of his own past association with the politics of the Persian Gulf, that Lord Curzon should cast a somewhat anxious eye in that direction. The danger of the establishment at the head of the Gulf of a strong and hostile Turko-German combination had now been removed; and the danger to be guarded against must be looked for nearer home. There was, undoubtedly, a distinct undercurrent of suspicion perceptible in certain quarters in England, that in this region the Government were harbouring Imperialistic, or at least commercial, aims. And Lord Curzon realised the importance of convincing public opinion of the impossibility, on the highest grounds, of our ever voluntarily agreeing to the restoration of Baghdad and the Province of which it was the capital, to Turkey. He accordingly sat down and penned a Memorandum in which the arguments against any such act of gratuitous folly were skilfully marshalled. First and foremost was the compelling need of self-preservation. To restore Baghdad to Turkey would be to revive the shattered German ambition of a great Teutonised dominion stretching through Europe and Asia Minor as far as the Persian Gulf—"which is the real dream of German world policy and which is the weapon with which, in a future war, Great Britain is to be struck down."

But there were other reasons equally cogent and of a kind more likely to appeal to the particular section of public opinion which

was most in need of instruction on the question. The Turks themselves were interlopers in the country and were detested by the inhabitants. We had freed the Arab population from Turkish misrule and had solemnly assured them that never again should they be given over to the hand of the oppressor. The Viceroy of India had himself proceeded to Basra and had there repeated this pledge in a public speech. For the first time for centuries, even while war was in progress, order and good government were being evolved out of chaos and oppression. The great mass of the Arab tribes had already come over to us. They would throw in their lot with us more definitely still when the impending attack by Turko-German forces was thrown back—" for it is an incurable trait of the Arab character that he likes always to be on the winning side ; he is the political Vicar of Bray of the East."

Slowly but surely an Arab State was being built up to which Great Britain herself desired to entrust the future destiny of the country. But time and patience were required if out of the disorder and oppression of centuries a stable indigenous Administration was to be created. If these lands were to be set on their feet again—" as Egypt was set on its feet after a Turkish misrule not less gross ; if indigenous institutions are to be created among a people who have almost lost the idea of what freedom is, and if the splendid and natural resources of the country are once again to be revived after centuries of neglect and decay, the responsibility of the undertaking must be assured by a civilised Power. The only civilised Power that is either equipped for the task, or is interested in it, is Great Britain, and if she were to throw it up, the result would not only be detrimental and even dangerous to herself, but positively disastrous to the native peoples." [1]

[1]Memorandum dated September 21st, 1917.

CHAPTER X

THE MONTAGU-CHELMSFORD REFORMS

1917-1919

The questions which came up for decision in Palestine and Mesopotamia were the direct outcome of the war. Further east, questions of no less difficulty were coming to the surface, drawn from the depths by the ripples which radiated outwards from the centre of the world's disturbance. And, to the many problems with which the Cabinet were confronted during the summer of 1917, was added that of the future Government of India. The situation in India itself was such that the Viceroy considered it his duty to press for a very early statement of the views and intentions of the Home Government. And in May, Mr. Chamberlain, then Secretary of State for India, invited the attention of his colleagues to the very serious problems with which the Government were faced and requested a decision as to the action to be taken. "It is not too much to say," he wrote, "that upon a right decision at this critical time depends the peace and contentment of India for years and perhaps generations to come."

It was natural that Lord Curzon should be expected, and should desire, to take a prominent part in the discussions on the matter, and he took an early opportunity of placing his views before the Cabinet. He was under no illusions as to the causes which had forced the question to the front. The generally accepted view that political concessions were due as a reward for the part played by India in the war, he brushed aside. Indian soldiers had rendered loyal and valiant service in the various theatres of hostilities; but Indian

soldiers were the last people in the world to hanker after political concessions. The true reward *in pari materia* for such services was the grant of commissions in the army to Indian officers, and to this proposal he had given his vigorous support. "You will have followed the Indian *dénouements*," he wrote in a letter to Mr. Chamberlain in August, 1917, after the latter had left the India Office. "D—, C—, and others put up a very strong opposition to the Indian commissions; but, with my very emphatic support, Montagu was able to carry it, just as you would have wished."[1] And apart from the services rendered by her soldiers it could scarcely be said that India's war effort had been such as to call for any exceptional reward. No other part of the Empire had suffered less or reaped greater advantage from the war then she had done.

Neither, in Lord Curzon's view, could it be contended that one of those milestones had been reached in Indian history at which Constitutional Reform could be said to be the legitimate outcome of acquired experience, or to be overdue. Thirty-one years had elapsed between the first India Councils Act in 1861 and the Act which he had himself piloted through the House of Commons when Under Secretary for India in 1892. Seventeen years had passed before the next advance had been made in the shape of the Minto-Morley Reform scheme of 1909. Eight years only had run their course since then.

If, then, the need for a further step forward was admitted, let it be acknowledged that it arose neither because the war had justified it, nor because experience demanded it; but because, in the course of the war, forces had been let loose, ideas had found vent, aspirations had been formulated which had either been dormant before, or which in a short space of time had received an almost incredible development.

> "We are really making concessions to India because of the free talk about liberty, democracy, nationality and self-government which have become the common shibboleths of the Allies, and because we are expected to translate into practice

[1] Letter dated August 25th. Mr. Chamberlain left the Government in July, as a result of the Report of the Mesopotamian Commission.

in our own domestic household the sentiments which we have so enthusiastically preached."[1]

Lord Curzon admitted the force of this latter consideration, and agreed that, in some form or other, a statement by the Government to the effect that self-government within the British Empire was the goal at which they aimed, was desirable ; it being clearly understood that it was under British guidance that this end must be pursued and could alone be achieved, and that there was no intention to weaken the essential safeguards of British justice and British power.

To the general assent which this proposition commanded there was one notable exception. From the use of the word "self-government" in any formula which might be devised to give expression to their intentions, one prominent member of the Cabinet dissented. He did so, not because he objected to setting up in India a system under which that country would more and more be governed by Indians, but because he feared that in the mouths of Englishmen the word "self-government" had acquired a perfectly definite but technical meaning—namely, a Parliamentary system of Government on a democratic basis. And he thought that to graft such a system upon the ancient and unchanging social system of the East would be to produce a hybrid which would almost certainly be worthless and probably dangerous.

Here, then, was raised the crucial question as to what they meant by the phrase "self-government." Did they mean the setting up of Parliamentary institutions on the English model, the fundamental feature of which was an Executive *responsible* to a representative body, which in its turn was *responsible* to an Electorate? Or had they in mind institutions on the pre-war German or the Japanese model, in which the Executive was not removable by the Legislature and was not, therefore, *responsible* to it in the technical meaning of the term ; but institutions which could, none the less, legitimately be described as self-governing, in that both Executive and Legislature would be partly—and ultimately wholly—Indian in composition?

It appeared that some meant one thing and some another ; while it is not too much to say, perhaps, of others that they had no very

[1]Note written by Lord Curzon for the War Cabinet in June 1917.

clear ideas as to what exactly they did mean. In their representations to the Secretary of State the Government of India had been careful not to commit themselves to any specific form of self-government. The special circumstances of India, they pointed out, differed so widely from those of any other part of the Empire that they could scarcely expect an Indian Constitution to model itself on those of the British Dominions. All that they contemplated was a gradual progress towards a larger measure of control by her own people which would ultimately result in a form of self-government, differing possibly in many ways from that enjoyed by other parts of the Empire, but evolved on lines which had taken into account India's past history and the special circumstances and traditions of her component peoples. Their proposals for assisting her towards this goal were, briefly, to confer greater powers and a more representative character upon existing local self-governing units such as District (rural) Boards and Municipal Councils; to increase the proportion of Indians in the higher administrative posts, and to pave the way for an enlargement of the constitutional powers of the Provincial Legislatures by broadening the electorate and increasing the number of elected members.

It could scarcely be said that these proposals constituted a contribution of much originality towards the solution of a complex problem. Their weak spot was at once detected by the Secretary of State, who pointed out that to increase the number of elected members of a Legislative body, without at the same time giving them any real control in any Department of Government, would merely result in an embarrassing multiplication of irresponsible critics without effecting any real advance in the direction of self-government. He thought that a scheme must be attempted under which some authority and responsibility would be conferred on members of the Legislatures, and he proposed the appointment of a small Commission to consider the best means by which this could be done.

As to a formula for the purpose of making known the policy of the Government, he did not think it possible to be more precise than to avow an intention to foster the gradual development of free institutions with a view to self-government.

Mr. Montagu, who succeeded Mr. Chamberlain at the India

Office in July, submitted to the Cabinet a formula substantially the same as that suggested by his predecessor—"the gradual development of free institutions with a view to ultimate self-government within the Empire." In place of a Commission, as proposed by Mr. Chamberlain for determining the nature of the steps to be taken to give effect to this policy, he suggested that in accordance with an invitation issued by the Viceroy to Mr. Chamberlain and now extended to himself, he should proceed to India at the head of a small deputation to investigate matters on the spot.

Lord Curzon's attitude now becomes extremely difficult to understand. Contrary to all experience, his mind on this, the one question of all others on which he might have been expected to see clearly, seemed to be tossing painfully on a sea of indecision. For once his power of setting forth in precise language exactly what he had in mind seems to have deserted him. He had certainly never given anyone cause to suppose that he regarded a Parliamentary system as in the least suitable to the circumstances of India. In the discussions of the Minto-Morley scheme of 1909 he had pointed out that the seeds of Parliamentary Government were being sown. But he had done so, not in commendation of what was being done, but as a warning against the consequences.

> "The noble Viscount," he declared, in a speech in the House of Lords, "assured us that he had no ambition to set up any sort of Parliamentary system in India, or even to share in the beginning of that operation. I do not doubt that in uttering those words the noble Viscount was entirely sincere; but believe me that though it may not be his ambition it will inevitably be the consequence of his act."[1]

And now, when a fresh step forward was in contemplation, he warned the Cabinet once more of the danger which he apprehended —"I entertain no shadow of doubt," he wrote, "that these bodies (the enlarged Legislative Councils proposed by the Government of India) will gradually convert themselves into the very form, i.e., of small Parliaments which I ventured to forecast in the House of Lords

[1] Speech delivered on February 23rd, 1909.

Debates in 1909, and which Lord Morley repudiated with a vehemence which was equally short sighted and sincere."

Yet, holding these views, he illogically characterised the Note in which exception had been taken by one of his colleagues to the use of the word *self-government*, as " stubborn " and " reactionary " ; and more astonishing still, by changes which he introduced into the formula proposed by Mr. Montagu, did more than anyone else to ensure the establishment in India of a Parliamentary system of Government on the English model.

The formula drawn up by Mr. Montagu was as follows :

> " His Majesty's Government and the Government of India have in view the gradual development of free institutions in India with a view to ultimate self-government within the Empire."

This, at least, left open the question of the type of the free institutions to be set up. It did not rule out a constitution modelled on that of Japan, or on that which has since been introduced in the State of Mysore in which an Executive irremovable by the Legislature, and so not responsible to it in the technical sense, is nevertheless brought into close organic union with the representatives of the people by means of the Initiative on the part of the popular Assembly on the one hand, and the Referendum to it by the Executive on the other.

This formula did not, however, satisfy Lord Curzon ; and on the eve of its publication he redrafted it as follows :

> " The Policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the Administration, and the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realisation of *responsible Government* in India as an integral part of the British Empire."

The italics are mine. " When we came to the Constitutional question," he wrote in a letter to Mr. Chamberlain, describing the

proceedings, " . . . I suggested a new formula which seemed to me rather safer and certainly nearer to my own point of view than the words you had originally favoured."[1] And a little later he wrote in a similar sense to the Viceroy—" It was, I think, mainly due to me that you got from the Home Government the pronouncement which you repeated in your Council—indeed the actual words were mine."[2]

What then was Lord Curzon's point of view? His introduction of the word " responsible " into the formula in association with the word " self-government," can only have had one meaning; it can only have meant that it was a Parliamentary system which the Government aimed at setting up. Did he realise this? It is almost incredible that he did not do so, more particularly since there can be little doubt that the wording was suggested to him by a lecture on the Problems of Indian Government, delivered by Lord Islington at the request of the Oxford Delegacy for the Extension of Teaching, in which the significance of the phrase " responsible self-government " was specially emphasised. The lecture was delivered on August the 8th, and a copy of it, presented to him by the author, reached Lord Curzon a day or two before he redrafted the formula submitted by the Secretary of State. In this copy two passages are underlined in pencil—evidently by Lord Curzon himself. Both deal with the introduction of *responsible* self-government into India.

> " I would say at once that, if the ideals of the British Empire stand for anything, India's future must be in accord with those ideals and her ultimate ambition which she must one day realise, after successfully surmounting the difficulties before her, is the attainment of responsible Government within the Empire."

The other passage was explanatory:

> " . . . it is to be remembered that if, in deference to the Legislative Council, the Government modify their policy, the Council would have to shoulder the responsibility for the

[1] Letter dated August 25th, 1917. [2] Letter dated October 17th, 1917.

results. This is the essence of responsible Government as we understand it. To secure its introduction into Indian Local Governments a suitable system of elections is important, so that the elected members may be properly representative of the various classes of Indian Society. Only if this is done will it be possible, consistently with the interests of the people, to make the elected Councillors responsible for policy, and to make them realise that for whatever they say or do, they will be held accountable to constituents free to displace them if they fail to give satisfaction."

The obvious inference, then, is that as a result of further consideration Lord Curzon had come to the conclusion either that Parliamentary Government was after all the right form of Government to aim at establishing in India, or that it was now inevitable and had better be frankly accepted by the Cabinet. This inference, however, becomes untenable in the light of his subsequent procedure. For when the scheme devised by Lord Chelmsford and Mr. Montagu, in accordance with the formula drawn up by Lord Curzon himself, was seen to amount to the introduction of Parliamentary Government, Lord Curzon expressed astonishment and dismay. He would ask his colleagues in the Cabinet, he said, to bear in mind when considering the proposals, that, whether they were regarded as being moderate or extreme, they would, if accepted, involve a complete and irrevocable change in the political and administrative relations of Great Britain and India.

"For they propose to do two things, neither of which has hitherto been contemplated, and both of which have been quite recently and solemnly disavowed by British Liberal Ministers, viz., (a) to lay the foundations of a Parliamentary system in India which was almost passionately repudiated by Lord Morley in 1909; and (b) to set up almost complete Indian provincial autonomy which Lord Crewe, his successor as Secretary of State, from his seat in the House of Lords not less emphatically and authoritatively disavowed."[1]

[1]Note written for the Cabinet, June 3rd, 1918.

No wonder that on receipt of a copy of this Memorandum, the Secretary of State should have written :

> " I am sure you will not resent it when I say that your Note on my Report comes to me as a great shock and a surprise. From our conversation together, I had ventured to hope that your criticism would be mainly directed to detail, and I notice with extreme regret your very weighty word of doubt about the principles on which the Report is based. . . I would beg of you to understand that neither the Viceroy nor I underrated the fundamental nature of the changes which we propose ; but we did think that the Announcement of August the 20th contemplated the changes and that it was incumbent upon us to carry that Announcement loyally to its fulfilment." [1]

Mr. Chamberlain took a similar view. He agreed with Lord Curzon as to the magnitude of the changes proposed. But he pointed out that the source of these changes was not the Report drawn up by the Secretary of State and the Viceroy, but the Declaration which the Secretary of State had been authorised to make on behalf of the Government on August the 20th, 1917.

No amount of argument served, however, to shake the attitude of hostility which Lord Curzon had now taken up towards the scheme embodied in the Report ; and he viewed with the utmost aversion all approaches made to him with a view to furthering its prospects. He agreed, though reluctantly, to the publication of the Report, but only on condition that it was made clear that the Cabinet were in no way committed to its contents. He agreed, even more reluctantly, to the appointment of two Committees to investigate in India the question of the Franchise, and that of the division of the administrative field between the new Executives of which the Provincial Governments were to consist. On this latter question he hesitated so long before committing himself, that on July the 23rd, 1918, Mr. Montagu wrote to him summarising recent events and begging for a decision :

[1] Letter from Mr. Montagu to Lord Curzon, dated June 6th, 1918.

"The situation, as I understand it, is as follows. You, I and Chamberlain met. After a preliminary discussion, in which I suggested certain amendments to Chamberlain's proposal, I had, unfortunately, to leave. I asked you the next day what the result was, and I was told that Chamberlain would write to me. Chamberlain wrote to me saying that he thought you would assent to the appointment of the two Committees, but that you saw objections to the rest of my proposals and that I had better write to you on the subject. I wrote to you on the subject on Tuesday last. You told me on Thursday that you would reply to my letter. Owing to your preoccupations I have not yet received that letter and I am awaiting it. When it comes I shall know where we stand. At present I do not know what, if anything, has been decided, and whether we sat *ad referendum* to the Cabinet, or whether we were empowered to decide."

On July the 25th Lord Curzon replied at considerable length. He did not dissent from Mr. Montagu's summary of what had taken place; and he confirmed what Mr. Chamberlain had written —"After you had left the room I told Chamberlain that I would agree, most reluctantly, to the two Committees proposed by him and urged by you; but that I did not see why we should either set up the India Office Committee[1] now, or offer the further sop to India of a batch of Civil Service appointments."[2] He went on to make clear his strong objection to committing himself in any way to the scheme contained in the Report:

"Now I come to your Report. We decided to publish it and no more for the present. But ever since, pressure has been, and I am confident will continue to be, applied, (to persuade us?) to agree first to one thing and then to another, until inevitably we shall have forfeited our liberty of action, and shall be committed to proceedings of which some of us may at bottom

[1] A third Committee to be charged with the task of examining and reporting on the changes in the relations between the India Office and the Government of India which would be necessitated by the introduction of the proposed scheme.

[2] A proposal to fill immediately a proportion of the vacancies in the Indian Civil Service for which English candidates were not available, by the nomination of Indians.

disapprove. You have, naturally enough, in your mind, not merely your own hopes and aspirations, but a House of Commons predisposed to advanced proposals, which there are probably not a dozen men in that House who are really qualified to understand. I have in my mind both my own convictions, based at least upon some experience, and the knowledge that if I am still a member of the Government when legislation is introduced, I shall be held largely responsible for it; and that in the House of Lords, where there are a good many people with Indian experience, while it will only be with the utmost difficulty that advanced proposals will be carried at all, if I am unable to endorse them myself the likelihood of their being accepted will be materially reduced. In these circumstances I want to keep myself free until the results of the various investigations come in; and I am made more and more uncomfortable as successive steps are taken, or proposed, which appear to cut away foot by foot the somewhat precarious ground upon which I stand."

Finally, he made unmistakably clear his dislike of the scheme itself.

"Why is it necessary to proceed at breakneck speed in a case that constitutes a revolution, of which not one person in a thousand in this country realises the magnitude, and which will probably lead by stages of increasing speed to the ultimate disruption of the Empire? The suggested reforms will probably in some respects be quite futile; in others the harm they do will very likely have been grossly exaggerated. But they will drive certain, perhaps unsuspected, roots deep into the soil, which will shake the foundations of the entire structure both of Indian society and of British rule. I heard Morley saying all the things that you are saying now. He has subsequently written a book to prove what wonderful things he did. But, before seven years have elapsed, you go out and compose another book to prove that he was all wrong and that his feats were fiascoes. I shrink from applying any moral except that haste and confidence are liable in Indian undertakings to rude

disappointment. My own experience in India was not devoid of such demonstrations. I have seriously considered the alternative of saying not another word in the Cabinet about any of these proposals, and then, when they finally assume a shape for which I shall have no responsibility, of deciding whether to leave the Government and recover my freedom with regard to them. I dare say this would be the more logical course. I have only not so far adopted it because it did not seem to me quite loyal or fair with regard either to ordinary Cabinet obligations, or to my acceptance of the formula which you announced, with my full consent, nearly a year ago."

It is easy to imagine that to a Secretary of State bent on carrying through a far-reaching scheme of Constitutional Reform, for which he never doubted that he possessed a mandate from the Cabinet and from Parliament, this letter must have come as a rude surprise. He replied go it on July the 30th.

"You accuse me of pressing and squeezing you into new positions. Believe me I cannot, although I search my conscience, find myself guilty of that charge. I claim that I have not pressed you to anything since you assented to the publication of the Report save the steps which seemed to me to be necessary to gain you all the information you required. These are not decisions as to proposals; in fact I do not want decisions on proposals at this stage. These are decisions as to steps to be taken previous to the introduction of a Bill. . . Finally, I want to make an appeal to you. Controversy with you distresses me very much. You talk in your letter of my hopes and aspirations. My hope and aspiration is to carry forward a continuous Indian policy; that is the only one I have. I want to continue the policy of Morley, Crewe, Chamberlain, Hardinge, with your support and assistance. It was you who helped in the Pronouncement of the 20th of August; it was you who supported the suggestion that I should go to India. . . It has been a matter of infinite regret to me that since our preliminary talk on the Report, we have never had another discussion on it.

Will you not let me help you whilst you are making up your mind? If you see points for criticism why will you not let me try to answer them? I seek for nothing but to act as a colleague. I would regret nothing so much as that we should find ourselves finally in opposition to one another. If, therefore, I could only get you to believe that all I am asking now is assent to the necessary steps for completing my proposals and then your co-operation in framing the necessary Bill. I do hope and trust that you will dismiss from your mind any suggestion that you are being rushed or squeezed, and that you will not allow your mind to crystallise previous to discussion with me, and that we may go forward to carry out the policy of August the 20th together. It is because I hope that I can convince you that what I want is to proceed without halt, but not at breakneck speed, that I do not pause now to comment upon one sentence in your letter which shocked me very much—'a revolution which will probably lead by stages of increasing speed to the ultimate disruption of the Empire?' Surely you did not mean this? So far as I can see it must apply, if it applies at all, to the Pronouncement of the 20th August; but—Oh, well! I am more than anxious to avoid controversy and I forbear to write further on this subject."

Matters between Lord Curzon and the Secretary of State were in this delicate position, when a motion to refer the Report to a Joint Committee of the two Houses of Parliament, tabled in the House of Lords by Lord Midleton, necessitated some statement by the Leader of that House. Lord Curzon was careful to avoid committing himself either to approval or condemnation of the scheme itself. Many of the speeches delivered in the course of the debate had contained a good deal of criticism of the Report itself and of the recommendations which it made. "With that part of the discussion," said Lord Curzon, "I am not particularly concerned to deal." It was the procedure adopted and proposed to be adopted by the Government, that the motion directly challenged; and on that question he had no hesitation in throwing in his lot with the Secretary of State. A Joint Committee of the two Houses would

be an appropriate body to which to submit a Bill based on the Report; but before that stage was reached the Government must be permitted to arrive at their own conclusions on the particular proposals made in the Report without the intervention of any outside authority.

Encouraged by this modest measure of support, Mr. Montagu became hopeful once more of securing Lord Curzon's acceptance of the main principles on which his scheme was based. Yet, when the Cabinet decided in February 1919 to appoint a Cabinet Committee to prepare the Bill already promised in the King's speech, Lord Curzon refused to serve on it, giving as his reasons pressure of other work and the difficulty of his own position. "My own position," he told the Secretary to the Cabinet when declining the invitation to serve, "is a peculiar and difficult one. I am not in complete agreement with some of Montagu's proposals: and while on the one hand I have not the time to thresh them out in Committee (which would be a great labour) I am unwilling on the other hand to be invested with responsibility for their final form which would certainly be the case if I were to serve on the Committee, whether I had or had not attended its meetings."[1]

Once more the Secretary of State became seriously alarmed.

> "Thank you for your letter of this morning," he wrote, on receipt of a letter from Lord Curzon conveying to him his decision. "I am bound to confess that it makes me very unhappy... The King's speech has now announced legislation and yet, although I cannot believe that you are going to disinterest yourself entirely in the matter, indeed it would be lamentable if you were to, because of your interest in it, I cannot persuade you to co-operate in the preparation of the Bill. Out of deference to your wishes and in order that the Committee might be quite free to discard or modify anything in the Reforms scheme that we have published, I abandoned the idea of asking the Cabinet to assent to principles on which the Committee should work, but even this has been unsuccessful ... I tell you again in all sincerity that I am starting as a mem-

[1]Letter dated February 14th, 1919.

ber of this Committee with every desire to produce a Bill which you can support whole-heartedly. Your share in the drafting of the announcement makes it imperative that you should have a share in carrying it out."

Lord Curzon was not to be shaken in his decision. " I can press you no further," Mr. Montagu wrote on February the 17th " but I take a very serious view of your statement that you cannot consent either to become a member or to state your objections or suggestions to a Committee of the Cabinet. I do not know how and when we shall ever get an agreed Government Bill at this rate."

He was unduly apprehensive. Though Lord Curzon never overcame his dislike of the measure, it is doubtful if he ever seriously contemplated resignation over it. When the Bill came up for Second Reading in the House of Lords on December the 12th, 1919, he confined himself in the main to a defence of the procedure adopted by the Government, and to a discussion of the alterations introduced into the framework of the Bill by the Joint Committee. On the merits of the scheme he said little, and that little can scarcely have been gratifying to its supporters. " This is a great experiment," he declared. " I would not have quarrelled with anybody who used the words ' daring experiment.' I am not certain that I should cavil even at the word ' rash.' " He did not think that India would be better governed under the new dispensation than it had been in the past. " I do not think that it will be so well governed. I think that the standard will tend to fall." But he realised that with " the modern ideal of Nationalism and self-determination " making in the circumstances of the times so strong an appeal, the peoples of countries such as India attached much more importance to being governed, even though not so well governed, by themselves, than they did to being even superbly governed by another race.

In the subsequent stages of the Bill which received the Royal Assent on December the 23rd, he took no part.

CHAPTER XI

THE IRISH QUESTION AND VOTES FOR WOMEN

1916-1918

THESE first years of Lord Curzon's experience as a Cabinet Minister were necessarily burdened with the conduct of the war All else was overshadowed by one all absorbing purpose—that of inflicting defeat upon the enemy. Domestic differences were as far as possible tabooed. Yet it was not possible wholly to banish from the Council room the wraiths of former controversies. On June the 28th, 1916, Lord Curzon had lifted the curtain a little on a scene of discord in the proceedings of a supposedly harmonious Cabinet. "We have been having terrible internal ructions over Ireland," he told Lord Lamington; "but I think that the Cabinet will survive."

It had, assuredly, not been of their own choice that Mr. Asquith's Cabinet had laid their fingers, at such a time, upon the thorny ramifications of the Irish question. The Irish question had, in fact, forced itself upon the Cabinet—abruptly and in a manner full of menace. On the evening of the 24th of April, 1916, a telegram from Dublin Castle had been placed in the hands of the Chief Secretary in London. From the laconic message which it contained a harassed Government had learned that at noon on that day an insurrection had broken out in Dublin, that an attack had been made upon the Castle, and that a number of important buildings in the city had been occupied by rebel forces.

The rebellion was suppressed; but the unhealthy state of Ireland, of which the rebellion was but a symptom, remained, calling imperatively for action. And since, in the circumstances of the time, it

was inevitable that any action that a Liberal Prime Minister was in the least likely to agree to, should run counter to Unionist rather than to Irish Nationalist principles, Lord Curzon, as a leading member of the Unionist wing of the Coalition Government, found himself involved in a peculiarly distasteful controversy.

Had circumstances allowed he would never, I think, have taken any very active interest in the Irish question. Though his attitude towards the Home Rule issue was that conventionally demanded of a member of the Conservative party, the whole question was one which was incidental rather than essential to his own political creed. And it is somewhat remarkable that, though he himself held an Irish peerage and owed his seat in the House of Lords to the suffrages of the small and specialised constituency of Irish peers, he had never once in the course of all his travels set foot in Ireland. His general view was that the existing Constitution of the United Kingdom had proved its worth and was superior to any other that had been suggested. The various schemes of devolution which had been widely canvassed at the time of the party truce following upon the death of King Edward, he had dismissed as fantastic, or, at least, far-fetched. There was no room, he declared in a speech at Bristol, for six Parliaments in these petty islands. And to this view he had steadfastly adhered. "Like A. J. Balfour," he wrote some time later when the idea of the creation of ten or twelve Parliaments for Great Britain had been put forward once again as a possible solution of the problem—this time by Mr. Winston Churchill at Dundee—"I favour the existing Constitution because I think on the whole it is the best; and I do not want even for the *beaux yeux* of Ireland to set up all these Parliaments, Ministries, Exchequers, Powers . . . I do not want even two Parliaments in England. One will kill the other."[1] And there he would have been content to leave matters.

With the passage of the Parliament Act, however, the Irish question had taken on a new and more menacing phase, for the prospect of a Home Rule Bill being forcibly placed upon the Statute Book under its provisions had stirred feeling in the North of Ireland to such an extent as to make it unmistakably clear that the people of

[1] Letter to Lord Selborne.

Ulster would resist by force any attempt on the part of the Government to subject them to the rule of an Irish Parliament sitting in Dublin. And Lord Curzon, in common with all who were actively concerned with the politics of the time, found himself obliged to give serious attention to the problem.

His own strong inclination would have been to see an attempt made to find a solution by consent. Reference has been made in an earlier chapter to the deep impression which had been made upon his mind by the success with which a Constitution had been fashioned in South Africa ; and, given a similar spirit of good will, he believed that British statesmanship should be capable of achieving in the case of Ireland what had been secured in even more difficult circumstances in South Africa.

> " I happened to be in South Africa when the South African Constitution was being drawn up," he stated in the House of Lords. " The circumstances were even more difficult than those of framing a Constitution for Ireland, because the two parties were not only separated by great differences of race, religion, and so on, but had been actually engaged in war. You may almost say that the hands of the people who met in conference had been imbrued in each other's blood. How was it done ? The four States elected their delegates and sent up their most important men. Those persons met in conference, first in Durban, next in Cape Town, and then in Bloemfontein, the three capitals. They met without the embarrassing presence of the Press and they discussed the matter in secret conclave. Between the sittings they met constantly, and I had the honour of meeting them and hearing them converse in private houses and elsewhere. Line by line, word by word, they went through the proposed Constitution. They did not approach the matter as antagonists ; they approached it as statesmen. Not a single man had any desire to revive old sores or to score off the other party. They wanted to build up a new Constitution in which all could join for the benefit of the country. Something is to be learned from that. Further, when the Constitution had been drawn up, it was submitted

to the Parliaments of the various States concerned, and in the case of one State, Natal, of whose adhesion there was some doubt, it was actually sent on referendum to the people. If you are constructing a new Constitution for a country sundered by great differences, that is the method and those are the lines on which you ought to proceed."[1]

Lord Curzon believed, moreover, that outside the ranks of party, there would be found to exist a strong desire for an amicable settlement. "I am not at all happy about this Home Rule question," he wrote in September 1911. "If, as I believe, the Government mean to bring in a purely partisan measure to satisfy Redmond and make things easy for themselves without regard to statesmanship, or to Ulster, then no opposition on our part can be too strong. But if we exhibit no capacity to deal with the matter ourselves, if we have no alternative policy and if we merely fight the Home Rule Bill on the old lines, then I am half disposed to think we shall fail in the country."[2]

Lord Lansdowne sympathised with his point of view, but was painfully conscious of the difficulties in the way. "I have myself always been ready to treat respectfully proposals for a further devolution of public business to local bodies; but that is very thin ice, and you may remember I got into much hot water for allowing Anthony MacDonnell to talk to me about his Devolution scheme. Up to the present time I have heard of no policy which we could, and Redmond would, look at for a moment."[3] Lord Curzon agreed, but still urged that the door should not be irrevocably closed against all possibility of compromise.

"The only way to solve the Home Rule question is not for us to produce a plan now; but to be willing to consider a plan (for relief of House of Commons) and to go to the Ulstermen and say—what is the maximum you will take?

[1]Speech on the 2nd reading of the Home Rule Bill in the House of Lords, on January 30th, 1913.
[2]Letter to Lord Lansdowne, September 20th, 1911.
[3]Letter from Lord Lansdowne to Lord Curzon, September 25th, 1911.

> The thing has got to come in some form or other (I mean Devolution) and we want to settle it with your consent." [1]

He thought that the Government were as much to blame as the Ulster leaders for the uncompromising spirit which stalked abroad. "I do not at all want to go screaming round on the Carson lines, though I readily grant that if the Home Rule Bill is going to be, as I believe, a gigantic party job, we shall be entitled and bound to resist it by every means in our power." [2]

And when the terms of the Bill became known, he at once realised that they were such as would goad the people of Ulster into taking all the steps which they regarded as necessary to defend themselves against the attempt which was to be made to subject them to what they regarded as an intolerable tyranny. He approached the question, as he was careful to point out in his speech on the Second Reading of the Bill, from the standpoint of an Englishman whose connection with Ireland was purely accidental, who was free from any of those passionate emotions that arose from race or residence, and who could regard the matter to some extent with the detachment of an outsider. And he was convinced that in the treatment which they were proposing to mete out to Ulster they were asking too much of human nature. "You are asking Ulstermen to submit to a sacrifice which not even their great love for their country can justify." How, indeed, could the Liberal party defend the contemplated coercion of Ulster? Ever since the great Civil War there had hardly been a rebellion or an insurrection in any part of the world of a minority either suffering or fearing oppression, which had not been encouraged by members of the Liberal party in England. They had constituted themselves the international champions of the right of insurrection. They had made us the busybodies "and I suppose foreigners would say the political Pecksniffs of the world." Yet when Ulster proposed to do what in the case of Italy, or Greece, or Poland, or Hungary, or Armenia, or the Balkans, or the Sudan, they had clamorously applauded, they accused her of the wickedness of plunging the country into civil war. [3]

[1] Letter from Lord Curzon to Lord Lansdowne, September 29th, 1911. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] Speech in the House of Lords on January 30th, 1913.

But the most serious consequence which Lord Curzon apprehended from the determination of the Government to carry their Bill with the aid of the Parliament Act, was the effect which such a proceeding was bound to have upon the position of the Crown. It was understood to be the intention of the Government to place the Bill on the Statute Book before appealing to the country, but to refrain from bringing it into operation until a General Election had been held. The view of the Unionist leaders was that any such course was contrary to the spirit of the Constitution and fraught with grave peril; since not only would the passing of the Home Rule Bill into law over the heads of the people be likely to provoke a serious outbreak in Ulster, but if the subsequent verdict of the constituencies proved to be hostile to the measure, it would impose upon their successors the task of repealing legislation which had already taken its place on the Statute Book and so of depriving the Nationalist Party of the fruits of an already proclaimed victory, with results which, if incalculable, could scarcely be expected to be anything but inimical to the peace and good government of Ireland.

To Lord Curzon, as to others who had devoted their attention to this aspect of the matter, it seemed clear that if these things did indeed come to pass, the King would be held by large numbers of his subjects to have incurred a heavy measure of responsibility by giving his assent to the measure before, instead of after, an appeal to the people. To the question, had the King, as a Constitutional Monarch, the power to insist on an appeal to the country before signifying his assent to any particular measure, Lord Curzon replied in an emphatic affirmative. He did not challenge the doctrine that as a Constitutional Sovereign he could only act on the advice of a Minister; but he asserted that it had never been questioned by any Constitutional writer that, if the King was in doubt as to the advice tendered to him by his Ministers having the support of his people, he had an absolute right to change his advisers, to give the new Ministers whom he summoned the power to dissolve Parliament, and so to satisfy himself as to the wishes of the country.

But, if he entertained no doubts as to the Constitutional right of the Sovereign to act in this manner, he did not underrate the disinclination which the King might very naturally feel to reject the

advice conveyed to him by a Prime Minister with a substantial Parliamentary majority behind him; and when conferring with his more intimate colleagues he urged that, in this case, the position of the Crown should be safeguarded by the preparation of a formal statement of the King's reasons, both for urging his Ministers to agree to a reference being made to the people before the Bill became law, and—in the event of their continued unwillingness to accept his view—for acquiescing in their decision, while at the same time disclaiming any personal share of responsibility for the results of their action. Such a statement of the King's position should, he urged, be presented to the Prime Minister as a State Paper of the first importance with a plain intimation that His Majesty reserved the right, should occasion arise in which his own attitude was misrepresented or misunderstood, of demanding that its contents should be made public. So strongly did he feel upon the point that, when summoned to Balmoral in September 1913, he pleaded for the immediate preparation of such a document for presentation to the Prime Minister before the impending meeting of the Cabinet early in October, and went so far as to draw up, with the idea of laying it before the King for his consideration, the draft of such a declaration as he desired to see made.

In spite, however, of the interest which he took in this aspect of the matter and of the part which he played in the drama which was thus being enacted behind the scenes, his association with the controversy was neither so intimate nor so sustained as that of some of those who were responsible for the policy of the Unionist Party; and when, in September 1914, the Home Rule Bill received the Royal Assent, together with a Bill suspending its operation for an indefinite period,[1] he was glad enough to dismiss Ireland and the Irish question from his mind.

Hence his irritation and dismay at its rude recall in the spring of 1916. His position, and that of his Unionist colleagues in the Government, was rendered all the more difficult by reason of the rapidity with which matters developed. It was, indeed, no time for dallying and a great many things happened in a very short

[1] Actually for one year, or, if the European war was not then ended, to some other date to be fixed by an Order in Council.

space of time. The Prime Minister proceeded to Ireland in person and returned to report to his colleagues in the Cabinet. All the chief officers of the Irish Executive, including the Viceroy and the Chief Secretary, resigned. Mr. Lloyd George was offered, and refused, the office of Chief Secretary, but accompanied his refusal with an offer to make an attempt to find some common basis of agreement as between the different contending parties in Ireland.

It was only to be expected, perhaps, that out of these hurried happenings should have arisen misunderstandings. The Prime Minister had certainly not contemplated bringing the Home Rule Act into immediate, or even early, operation. Mr. Lloyd George on the other hand, while not contending that he had authority to commit the Cabinet, had assumed that he was authorised to deal with the Irish leaders on the understanding that Home Rule might be brought into immediate operation. The Irish leaders in their turn had derived the impression that Mr. Lloyd George, instead of ascertaining their views for submission to the Government, had made them a firm offer of immediate Home Rule subject to the exclusion of the six Counties of Ulster.

Rumours of these negotiations were soon circulating in Unionist quarters where they were received with cold disfavour, certain Unionist members of the House of Lords making it known to their leader that they would not shrink from throwing out a Home Rule Bill if it ever reached the Upper Chamber. Lord Curzon himself seems to have been in possession of no certain information as to the exact tenor of Mr. Lloyd George's conversations when, early in June, the report reached London of a speech delivered by Mr. Redmond at a meeting of the Irish Parliamentary party held in Dublin, according to which he had asserted that Mr. Lloyd George, after seeing and consulting men of all parties in Ireland, had formulated on his own responsibility a proposal—"which we may fairly regard as the proposal of the Government."

The speech was read with astonishment by the Unionist members of the Government; and, in the absence of Lord Lansdowne, who was spending the Whitsuntide recess in Ireland, Lord Curzon invited those of them who happened to be in London to a conference at his house to consider their position. Later the same day—June

the 17th—accompanied by Lord Robert Cecil, he sought an interview with the Prime Minister and represented to him the difficulty in which he and his friends were placed by Mr. Redmond's wholly unexpected statement. The Prime Minister agreed that the impression created by the speech was unfortunate, and declared, that since the Cabinet had never even considered any proposals, there could be no authority for the statement.

It was clear, however, that the matter could not be allowed to rest where it stood. In the absence of any official contradiction of Mr. Redmond's assertion, there was considerable perturbation in Unionist circles outside the Government, and at a meeting of the Cabinet held four days later, it was made unmistakably plain that the proposals which had been put forward by Mr. Lloyd George were not acceptable to the Government as a whole. On the other hand, there were obvious objections to bringing to an abrupt termination negotiations which had already progressed so far, and there was a disposition, among some at least of the Unionist members present, to reserve their decision on the question until they knew the exact outcome of Mr. Lloyd George's conversations. Lord Curzon, acutely sensitive to the atmosphere of suspicion in which the doings of the Cabinet were wrapped, felt the difficulty of his own position so strongly that he consulted a friend who, while concerned with the outcome of the controversy, stood nevertheless outside the ranks of party and of the Government, whether he ought to remain at his post or leave the Cabinet?

Negotiations and discussions proceeded throughout the summer; but no agreement was reached, and little real progress had been made towards a settlement when Mr. Asquith's Government fell and Mr. Lloyd George's Administration took its place.

With his inclusion in the small War Cabinet, which now became the supreme authority in the land, Lord Curzon's responsibility for the Government's policy towards Ireland became great. And he accepted the chairmanship of a small Cabinet Committee charged with the task of exploring all possible roads towards a settlement. A Bill which the Committee had reason to believe would be accepted, if with some show of reluctance, by the Irish Parliamentary party was actually drafted and submitted to the Cabinet when the Prime

Minister suddenly decided to throw upon the different parties in Ireland itself the responsibility of finding a settlement by agreement. Lord Curzon may well have felt some irritation at this abrupt rejection of the Bill which had only been drafted after endless labour on the part of his Committee. Yet an attempt to reach a settlement by means of conference on the part of those primarily concerned was in strict accord with the procedure which he had himself publicly urged. And it was with obvious sincerity that he pleaded for an atmosphere of goodwill when, on May the 21st, he announced in the House of Lords that invitations had been issued by the Prime Minister to the groups most closely interested, to send delegates to a Convention which was to be entrusted with an attempt to arrive at a solution of the centuries-old Irish problem by consent.

The Convention was to be free to consider any plan. "We see no necessity," he explained when commending the proposal to Parliament and the country, "if the Convention be summoned, to restrict its independence, or to embarrass its action by any instructions. Once they take their seats in the boat they must elect to steer their own course. This means, in practice, that no suggestions of policy or scheme will be ruled out of consideration. The doors will be open to any or every plan." The example of South Africa was ever present to his mind. He recalled the freedom with which in the assured secrecy of the conference room, the representatives of different and often conflicting interests had explained their own points of view and listened to those of others; and he laid it down as an important condition that if the Convention was to have a reasonable chance of success, it must sit behind closed doors. There must be no publication of authorised or unauthorised accounts of its proceedings. In an impassioned peroration he pleaded for the goodwill of all parties towards the plan.

> "The British Parliament has more than once tried its hand at a settlement of the Irish problem. Its efforts have been attended with conspicuous failure. During the last thirty years British statesmen have exhausted all the resources of their eloquence, their enthusiasm, their ability, in the effort to find a solution. They also have failed. Everybody now realises that

settlement must now come from Irishmen themselves. No one else knows so well as Irishmen how Irishmen want to be governed, or ought to be governed. Let them tell us in conclave. We, in your Lordship's House, can contribute a little by saying nothing and doing nothing in this debate or in subsequent proceedings which will interfere with that aim. The British public can, I think, do a good deal more by acting in sympathy. Above all, Irishmen themselves can contribute much by an exhibition of those qualities of calm patriotism, bold initiative and rich imagination which have made them one of the most attractive peoples of the earth. The tide is running fast in Ireland. I pray God that on this occasion we may not miss it." [1]

The hope, that at long last a real and generally acceptable solution of the Irish question was in sight, was tempered by contemplation of the debris of many shattered efforts in the past. But the sincerity and grace of the language in which Lord Curzon's appeal was couched, were widely recognised. " As an oratorical effort Lord Curzon's speech was a masterpiece, and he was delightful to listen to." Whether his arguments had carried conviction to the minds of those who were inclined to view with suspicion what wore the appearance of an enforced attempt to pacify Ireland, was another matter. " But if choice of language and felicity of expression could contribute to the end Lord Curzon achieved a notable success." [2]

The conditions which had made success possible in South Africa were, unhappily, not present in Ireland. The element in the Irish people, which hated England and would have welcomed her destruction, grew apace. The decision of the Government to release the leaders of the rebellion of 1916 may have been a courageous one. If so, it scarcely met with the reward which it deserved. Those who believed that in Ireland, in the circumstances of the time, magnanimity would inevitably be construed as fear, complained bitterly of the folly of the Executive. It may be that the Sinn Fein movement would have grown whatever policy the Government had pursued; but, whatever doubt there may be as to that, there

[1] Speech in the House of Lords on May 21st, 1917.
[2] *Irish Times* of May 22nd, 1917.

is at leaſt no doubt that it was the rapid growth of Sinn Fein during the latter half of the year 1917 that all but smashed the Convention and rendered its labours sterile.

During the opening weeks of its deliberations there was noticeable a genuine desire among all parties to reach agreement; and by October such progress had been made that a Committee of twenty members was charged with the task of drafting a scheme for submission to the whole body. Six weeks later the Convention was described by one of its members as being "in the throes of dissolution." The factor in the situation which had wrought this disastrous change was, undoubtedly, the tremendous accession of strength throughout the south and weſt of Ireland to the banner of Republicanism. The movement towards Republicanism had long been there; and the people at large were dimly conscious of this moving force stirring in their midſt. But they had not hitherto consciously or deliberately thrown in their lot with it. Ireland was, in faſt, trembling on the brink of a fateful decision. She had reached one of those breathless moments in the history of nations when a feather in the scale on one side or the other is sufficient to weigh it irretrievably down. In 1917 the feather fluttered in the air and dropped down finally into the Republican scale. A Sinn Fein rebel of the name of Ashe went on hunger strike in jail and subsequently died. His funeral was made the occasion of a vaſt demonstration. Thousands of men wearing Republican badges, many in uniform, some armed, all under military discipline, accompanied by a firing party, openly flouted the authority of the Government. All Ireland was watching; all Ireland saw the orders of the Government disregarded with impunity; and all Ireland drew its own conclusions. A moderate member of the Convention estimated that the number of Sinn Feiners had been increased that day by tens of thousands; a Nationaliſt member was heard to say that he did not know who was trying to govern Ireland at this moment; and many shrewd judges concluded that the Irish people had at laſt come to believe that the British Government were afraid of them, and that anything could be wrested from them—even independent representation at the Peace Conference when it came—provided that they threatened violence.

From that moment settlement by consent was doomed. The ferment outside was reflected in the altered atmosphere in the conference chamber itself. The Convention concluded its labours and issued a Report; but no real agreement had been reached.

The Government in London were sorely disappointed. They had pledged themselves, failing substantial agreement on the part of the Convention, to produce a Home Rule Bill and to make provision for Ulster. But the divisions in the Convention were reflected in the Cabinet; and the settlement which might have been reached as a result of the efforts of Lord Curzon's Committee a year before was far less easy of attainment now. "We had a long Cabinet this morning," Lord Curzon wrote on April the 5th, "mainly on our new man power proposals for next week and on our Irish policy, which is a matter of the deepest gravity and may wreck the Government. A Committee was to meet this afternoon to investigate one particular subject, and we were told to hold ourselves in readiness at our houses to be summoned either this evening or to-morrow morning. Our meeting to-morrow is to be followed by a meeting of all the Ministers (both inside and outside the Cabinet) and there may be another Cabinet after that."[1]

The result of these discussions was the appointment on April the 13th of another Committee under the chairmanship of Mr., afterwards Lord, Long, upon which Lord Curzon consented, though reluctantly, to serve.

But just as in 1917 the wave of Republicanism which had then swept over Ireland had rendered abortive the labours of the Convention, so in 1918 did the movement bring to nought the attempts of the Government to effect a settlement. And, when Lord Curzon rose to address the House of Lords on June the 20th, it was not to commend to their consideration a Bill for the better government of Ireland, but to explain that in face of the revelations made to the Cabinet in May of "a sinister and formidable conspiracy of the leaders of the Sinn Fein Movement in Ireland with the enemy of this country"—revelations which had occasioned in the Government "surprise and consternation"—it was considered impossible then to proceed with their proposals.

[1]Letter to Lady Curzon.

Thus ended for the time being, at any rate, the Government's endeavour to bring about a settlement of the Irish question by consent. And, when two years later an Irish Home Rule Bill was brought in and passed, Lord Curzon was too deeply absorbed in the work of the Foreign Office, to which he had succeeded as Foreign Minister in 1919, to play any very prominent part in the proceedings.

The Irish question was not the only subject of acute domestic controversy that came up for decision during the war. The question of Woman Suffrage became suddenly urgent in 1917, and proved none the less embarrassing to Lord Curzon because it ran counter to, rather than in conformity with, the normal lines of party cleavage. It is scarcely necessary to remind the reader of these volumes that throughout his life Lord Curzon had been one of the most vigorous and outspoken opponents of the Suffragist movement. When the question had first become a live issue, he had thrown himself enthusiastically into the fight and had devoted his remarkable talents as a beggar to collecting funds for the purpose of organising opposition to the movement. In 1910 he had approached Lord Cromer and Lady Jersey, who were at that time in control of the two organisations which had been formed to combat the policy—one a man's Society and the other a Woman's League—and had urged amalgamation. In co-operation with Lord Cromer he had collected, within a space of three months, a fund amounting, in sums actually paid and promised, to more than £20,000. And after Lord Cromer's retirement from the Presidentship of the newly formed League in February 1912, he had accepted that office—a position which he retained until its dissolution in 1918.

The question became a matter of immediate practical concern when, in the early part of 1917, a clause conferring the Parliamentary franchise upon women was inserted in a Representation of the People Bill, providing for a large extension of the existing franchise, which was then under discussion in the House of Commons. With this unforeseen event, the officials of the Anti-Suffrage League, whose activities had been diverted into other channels during the war, found themselves suddenly faced with the task of organising opposition to the proposal both in Parliament and in the country; and they turned at once to Lord Curzon for counsel and assistance.

It was soon seen that in the House of Commons their cause was a lost one. The part played by women in the war had brought about a marked revulsion of feeling on the question, and on the division, the opponents of the measure were able to muster only 55 votes as against the 385 votes given for it.

In these circumstances the organisers of the Anti-Suffrage League realised that their only hope of saving the situation lay in an appeal to the House of Lords. And in the fight in the Upper Chamber, if fight there was to be, they looked naturally enough to their President for powerful aid. At a meeting at his house in June, at which the procedure to be adopted was discussed between him and certain members of the Committee of the League, he declared himself ready to speak against the Clause when the Bill came before the House of Lords; and on the minds of some at least of those who were present he left the impression—though that he had ever committed himself to this extent was subsequently denied—that he would reinforce his speech by his vote. He does not seem to have realised, until much nearer the time, how difficult he might find it to reconcile his position as a member of the Government and Leader of the House of Lords with his position as President of the Anti-Suffrage League. Even when it dawned across his mind that his own liberty of action was likely to be restricted by his official position, he did not find in this knowledge any reason for resigning from the Presidentship of the League or for ceasing to encourage its members in their opposition to the measure. While the debate on the Second Reading of the Bill was in progress in the House of Lords he informed Mr. Arnold Ward, M.P., verbally, that he had come to the conclusion that as Leader of the House he would not himself be able to vote against the clause on the Committee stage of the Bill; but the disappointment caused to the Anti-Suffragists by this announcement was mitigated by the speech which he made in the course of the Second Reading debate. He went out of his way, in the course of his remarks, to lay stress upon the fact that the Bill was not a Government Bill in the ordinary sense of the word, and that on such questions as Proportional Representation and Women Suffrage members were left free to vote as they pleased. This declaration was hailed with satisfaction by

the members of the Anti-Suffrage League, and an expression of their gratification was conveyed to Lord Curzon by Mrs. Humphry Ward, who was now acting as Chairman of the League's Executive Committee, in a letter written on December the 23rd—"May I congratulate you warmly on your speech? It was most important to us to have it laid down that the Bill is not a Government Bill and that there will be absolute freedom of speaking and voting upon it."

He certainly gave the League no reason to suppose that, short of voting against the Clause himself, he did not still intend to do what lay in his power to secure its rejection. The people to get at, he urged in a letter to the Chairman on December the 30th, were the peers themselves; and he advised the despatch of a circular letter to every member of the House of Lords a few days before the Clause came up for consideration. Such a letter, he declared, should serve "to bring up a good many to vote, and after all that is what you want for the moment."

The rejection of the Clause was moved by Lord Loreburn on January the 10th. When Lord Curzon rose to address the House he said that speaking neither for the Government, nor as Leader of the House of Lords, but merely as an individual, he regarded the proposal contained in the Clause as one which would introduce "a vast, incalculable, and almost catastrophic change, which, whatever might be their views about it, was without precedent in history and without justification in experience. If your Lordships pass this part of the Bill," he exclaimed, "you are doing more than crossing the Rubicon—you are opening the flood gates to a stream which for good or evil will submerge many landmarks we have known." He proceeded to demolish the arguments advanced in support of the change, and scoffed at the suggestion that Parliament possessed any mandate for it from the country. It was a powerful—some may well have thought an unanswerable—condemnation of the measure, which did the utmost credit to the President of the Anti-Suffrage League.

But Lord Curzon had not finished. "Logically," he declared at the close of his indictment, "the direct consequence of everything I have said is that I should support the amendment." Here was the

first faint suggestion of an impending sensation; and the House hung breathlessly on his next words. "I do not intend to do so," he added. With this theatrical anti-climax, the whole tenor of his speech underwent a dramatic change. To his bewildered listeners it seemed as though with a single sentence he had abruptly thrust from him alike his obligations as President of the Anti-Suffrage League, and the freedom of opinion which he had claimed as an individual, and had donned in their place the strait-jacket of official responsibility. Woman Suffrage, he pointed out, had been inserted in the Bill by an overwhelming majority of the House of Commons. He asked them seriously to contemplate what might happen if in such circumstances they were to come into collision with the Lower Chamber. For himself, he concluded, he could not assume the responsibility of embarking on a course which might well precipitate a conflict.

It is doubtful if Lord Curzon could have taken a course which was more certain to secure the passage of the Clause. It was felt that, if a man could deliver so scathing and impassioned an indictment of the change and yet feel bound not to stand in the way of its adoption, his reasons for not doing so must be strong indeed. "There had been doubt about the result of this critical division," wrote an onlooker, "until the speech of Lord Curzon, Leader of the House. He told their Lordships frankly that if Woman Suffrage was eliminated the Bill would not survive. In these circumstances Lord Curzon stated that he would abstain from the division. This announcement sent a chill of disappointment into the hearts of the anti-suffragists, for it meant the frustration of their high hopes. There was an instant rally to the suffrage side and an addition of several waverers to the Mugwumps."[1]

The members of the Anti-Suffrage League were at first bewildered. Why advise us to bring up peers to vote against the Clause, they asked, only to exhort them to abstain when the crucial moment for doing so arrived? Bewilderment was quickly succeeded by resentment. "I have received several abusive letters from members of the League," Lord Curzon complained in a letter to Mrs. Humphry Ward three days later, "for my conduct in speaking

[1]The Parliamentary correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle* in its issue of January the 11th, 1918.

against Woman Suffrage in the House of Lords in my private capacity as I had promised to do, and refraining from voting, as Leader of the House, as I had told your son and everyone concerned—after much reflection—that I had no alternative but to do." In vain was it represented to him that it was not so much his actual abstention from voting as the manner of his doing so, that was resented.

> "As to your speech," wrote Mrs. Humphry Ward, in reply to his complaint, " . . . it seemed more and more impossible that it should not be followed by a vote. If your views were still such, was it conceivable that you should not give effect to them by your vote? I began to think Arnold must have been mistaken.[1] Then came the anti-climax, all the more effective because of the vehemence of the speech. You warned the House in the gravest tones of what the consequences of throwing out the Clause would be—that it would be a challenge to the Commons from which the Lords could not emerge with credit and so on. The effect was immediate and absolutely disastrous."[2]

The whole thing was an illustration of what has been said before, that Lord Curzon's imagination was not precisely of the type which enabled him to put himself in other people's skins. It was the story of the Parliament Bill over again—thoughtless encouragement of his friends in opposition to the measure and then, without warning or explanation, the adoption of a diametrically opposite attitude himself. In the one case, as in the other, he seemed to be incapable of understanding that the real cause of the bitterness which he excited was that, while encouraging the League in its policy of opposition to the measure and acting up to the letter of his undertaking to them by speaking against the Clause, he had then completely stultified his whole attitude up to that point by his subsequent procedure. It would, surely, have been easy to have disarmed the sort of criticism to which he laid himself open, had he frankly explained to the Committee of the League the position in which he found himself as soon as he himself realised it, and offered in the circumstances to resign the Presidentship.

[1] i.e. in reporting to the Committee of the League in December that Lord Curzon had decided not to vote. [2] Letter dated January 16th, 1918.

CHAPTER XII

THE COMING OF PEACE

1918-1919

THE cessation of hostilities under the terms of the Armistice concluded on November the 11th, 1918, brought to an end the understanding under which the Government had been carried on during the war. It was realised on all sides that a General Election could not be long delayed; and a question requiring an early answer was, therefore, should there be a break-up of the Coalition and a return to party? Opinion differed.

Lord Curzon, as we have seen, had never been a very ardent advocate of the idea of Coalition government, and his experience of the working of the two National Governments of which he had been a member, though satisfactory on the whole, had nevertheless not blinded him to the possible consequences of any attempt to stereotype such a form of Government in times of peace. Any such attempt would involve the formation of a Centre party and the consequent disappearance of the two historic parties as he had known them; and to any such contingency he was altogether opposed.

> "I heard with some alarm this evening," he wrote in February 1918, "that the Prime Minister was thinking of appointing a Joint Committee to arrange for organisation and programme of a new party under himself, to fight our battle at the next Election and to follow him hereafter. Further, that Milner (who is not a Conservative or a Unionist in the ordinary sense) is to be chairman of the Conservative section of the Committee.

If the above is correct, I should like to say at once that the movement is one which not only can I not support, but which I think to be entirely mistaken. As matters stand, I agree that if there were to be a General Election in the near future, it would be the duty of our party to give the fullest support to the Prime Minister for the prosecution of the war to the end—the object, indeed the sole object, for which the Coalition was formed and still exists. But, from the idea that our party should merge its identity in some new party, or should pledge its allegiance after peace has returned, I entirely dissent and I hope that you as our Leader will give no encouragement to it."[1]

It was not inconsistent with this view that he should have agreed with those who held in November, 1918, that the time had not yet come for a dissolution of the ties which had united representatives of Conservatism, Liberalism and Labour in the prosecution of the war.

"I had a few words with the Prime Minister about the General Election this afternoon," he wrote in a letter to Mr. Bonar Law, one day early in November. "I told him that I was in favour of as early a General Election as can be managed. I think the Government (I am assuming that they go to the country as a Coalition Government asking for a renewal of support) require a fresh national mandate if they are either to conduct the war to an end—should the Armistice break down—or if they are to undertake the even more difficult labours of the Peace Conference."

The question of the exact nature of the appeal to be made to the electors was not so simple.

"As to a programme I cannot speak; it is difficult to construct any programme in a week or two, and very difficult to go beyond general propositions in the present case. But I should

[1] Letter to Mr. Bonar Law, February 25th, 1918

think that a formula is capable of being devised that would enable candidates to ask with sufficient confidence for the votes of their constituents. One thing is certain, viz., that the old party programmes are obsolete. Asquith's attempt to serve up the stale dishes of his—and the reception it has met with—are sufficient proof of this."

And it was on the ground that it was in the best interests of the commonweal, that he appealed to Conservatives to give their support to a National Government. The task of reconstructing the national, industrial and social life was one which called for national, not party, effort; for co-operation, not isolated action; for good fellowship and not for faction. Only a Government which was conscious of representing all parties and classes in the nation would be sufficiently strong to shoulder successfully the burden of the immediate future.[1]

The majority of the Cabinet shared these views and, though the Labour party withdrew from the Coalition and Mr. Asquith led a Liberal campaign against the Government, it was as a Coalition that the latter appealed to, and received the support of, the country.

Before a General Election could be held, however, there were certain proceedings of a formal nature to be carried through. The relief felt on all sides at the termination of the war demanded definite expression; and on November the 18th, Lord Curzon rose from his place in the House of Lords to move that an humble Address be presented to His Majesty congratulating him on the conclusion of the Armistice and on the prospect of a victorious peace. The occasion was one to which Lord Curzon was especially well fitted to do justice. The subject lent itself to the particular style of oratory which he affected, and his speech proved worthy of the occasion. At the table at which he stood, he reminded those whom he was addressing, had been read out, within a period of less than three weeks, the terms of the Armistices successively imposed on Turkey, Austria-Hungary and the German Empire.

[1] Manifesto issued by Lord Curzon as President of the Association of Conservative clubs.

"And with the acceptance of those terms in their completion," he added, "the great fabric of over-weening ambition and towering pride reared by the Sovereigns and the peoples of the Central Empires, has toppled over and come with a crash to the ground. Rarely, my Lords, in history, has there been a fall from a pinnacle so high to a pit of such irretrievable disaster."

He laid stress upon the solemnity and the greatness of the hour, and upon the wonder of the victory. "Are we presumptuous," he asked, "if we see in it the judgment of a Higher Power upon panoplied arrogance and enthroned wrong?"

He paid a fine tribute to the steadfastness of the British people whose spirit, he declared, had never wavered.

"In those fateful days in August 1914, the inhabitants of this country, with quick and unerring instinct, grasped the true nature of the struggle upon which they were about to embark. They saw that it was not merely a question of our fidelity to Treaties or of the security of our shores, but it was a struggle between two great methods or principles of governing the world. It was the old historic secular conflict between Ormuzd and Ahriman—between the principles of good and evil—in the governance of men."

He spoke of the unity of all classes of the people and of the solidarity of the Empire.

"Among the many miscalculations of the enemy was the profound conviction, not only that we had a contemptible little army, but that we were a doomed and decadent nation. The trident was to be struck from our palsied grasp; the Empire was to crumble at the first shock; a nation dedicated, as we used to be told, to pleasure-taking and the pursuit of wealth, was to be deprived of the place to which it had ceased to have any right, and was to be reduced to the level of a second-class, or perhaps even a third-class Power. It is not

for us in the hour of victory to boast that these predictions have been falsified; but at least we may say this—that the British flag never flew over a more powerful or a more united Empire than now; Britons never had better cause to look the world in the face; never did our voice count for more in the councils of the nations, or in determining the future destinies of mankind"

Next, he accorded on behalf of the nation a joyous welcome to the prisoners of war, "streaming in driblets and sometimes in crowds, wasted but happy men, across the devastated frontiers of the fight." And he offered words of sympathy to those who had no returning victors to crown with laurels, no recovered prisoners to embrace and cheer. He paid a glowing tribute to the King and Queen who by their bearing and conduct had endeared themselves to millions of our race, and who had so lived and laboured that, where other thrones were tottering, the British Monarchy had driven fresh roots into the affections of its peoples. He prayed that the spirit of unity which had inspired the Allies during four years of fiery trial might remain with them in the future. "A little more than one hundred years ago," he reminded his audience, "the great romantic poet of our land, looking on the birth of a new Hellas, wrote these prophetic words:

'The World's great age begins anew,
The golden years return;
The earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn.
Heaven smiles and faiths and Empires gleam
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.'

A similar vision now rises above a far wider horizon. May we see it, under the guidance of Providence, assume form and substance before our eyes."

Many of those who listened to the speech were deeply moved by its sincerity and grace. "I must write you a line about your speech in the House of Lords to-day," wrote one who was more

often in opposition to, than in agreement with, Lord Curzon on political questions. "It not only expressed what we all wanted to have said, but it was the most perfect piece of English eloquence and literature which I have ever listened to."[1]

Speeches by the Prime Minister and by Lord Curzon in the two Houses of Parliament were merely the prelude to a series of popular rejoicings. And it was to Lord Curzon, with his talent for organisation and his innate love of pageantry, that the Prime Minister turned to direct the series of demonstrations of popular feeling that took place during the next two years. In collaboration with Field-Marshal Sir H Wilson and Lord Stamfordham he organised the reception accorded to M. Clemenceau and Marshal Foch on the occasion of their visit to London on December the 1st, 1918. He was Chairman of the Cabinet Committee which was charged with the task of organising the Peace Celebrations which were held on July the 19th, 1919. And it is to his genius that the nation owes the simple but profoundly moving service, which recurs annually on November the 11th, before the Cenotaph in London, when the people pay homage first in reverent silence, and then in solemn prayer and song, to the memory of those who during the war made the supreme sacrifice on the altar of national duty.

The proposal for the burial of an unknown warrior in Westminster Abbey emanated from the Dean; but it was Lord Curzon, once more, who was called in to preside over the Committee appointed to devise a scheme which should combine the unveiling of the Cenotaph on Armistice Day, 1920, with the interment in the Abbey. And it may, perhaps, surprise those who habitually pictured him as a proud patrician, scornful of the claims of the people and tenacious of the rights of rank, to learn that in all these projects he argued powerfully for the prominent participation of the masses. The first scheme for celebrating the conclusion of peace drawn up by his Committee contemplated rejoicings extending over four consecutive days, including a Sunday on which Services of Thanksgiving were to be held. Lord Curzon laid down that one of these four days should be *par excellence* a day of merrymaking for the masses of the people, both in London and in the provinces, and that

[1]Letter from Lord Harcourt, November 18th, 1918.

every effort should be made to give them their share in the celebrations. The programme on the other days, he pointed out, would be to a great extent official. But the final day should be, " as far as possible, non-official, spontaneous and democratic." And if much of what he and his Committee planned was destined to be still-born, this was due to no lack of imagination or enthusiasm on his part, but to circumstances arising which necessitated an earlier celebration than had been intended, and the compression of the programme into a single day.

Similarly, in the proposals which he submitted to the Committee appointed to arrange for the burial of the unknown warrior, it was the people whose claims to participation he kept constantly before him. He argued strongly against anything that would " detract from the simplicity of the ceremonial and lend histrionic and pompous elements to a solemn service." And he was insistent in his demand that such limited accommodation as would be available in the Abbey, should be allotted " not to society ladies or the wives of dignitaries, but to selected widows and mothers of those who had fallen, especially in the humbler ranks."

. . . . .

January of the year 1919 saw the Coalition Government, with Mr. Lloyd George at its head, firmly established in office with a mandate from the country to negotiate the terms of peace and grapple with the task of reconstruction. Lord Curzon still held office as Lord President of the Council. Fate held in store, however, work of a more specialised kind. On the morning of January the 3rd, Lord Robert Cecil, who was then serving as Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs—a post created as a temporary measure during the war—came round to 1 Carlton House Terrace with a message for Lord Curzon from the Prime Minister. Would he, in the absence of Mr Balfour and the Assistant Secretary of State at Paris in connection with the Peace Conference, take charge of the Foreign Office in London ? " I said that I would readily do so," Lord Curzon wrote when reporting the conversation to the Prime Minister for confirmation ; " and I undertook to commence on Monday morning, which I will do."[1]

[1]Letter to Mr. Lloyd George, January 3rd, 1919.

Thus, one day early in January, 1919, Lord Curzon realised one of the ambitions which he had formed in days which now seemed so long ago. Between him, as he took his seat at the desk in the Foreign Secretary's room, and the days of his early apprenticeship under the spacious guidance of Lord Salisbury, there yawned the gulf of 1914-19—a vast fissure torn across the face of time. Behind these long-drawn years loomed other troubled days of loosened political anchorage and grievous domestic sorrow; and behind them again the moving drama of the Indian Viceroyalty. And if, bearing upon his shoulders the burden of these strenuous years, he gazed with changed perspective at the world which lay beyond the Foreign Office window, that world itself had undergone great alteration. Troublous though the times had seemed as the 19th century had drawn towards its close, they now appeared, when viewed in retrospect, serene indeed.

> "My own acquaintance with the Foreign Office," he told the members of the Imperial Conference in 1921, "dates back to more than thirty years since I was Under Secretary to Lord Salisbury. At that time peace prevailed over the greater part of the world's surface, and we were almost excited if here and there was a patch—it might be the Sudan or Armenia or Crete—in which disturbed conditions prevailed. Now the whole world is still, although the war has ceased for two years, in a state of disturbance. As I sit in the Foreign Office and look out on the scene I am reminded of one of those lava-lakes with which some of you are familiar in the islands of the Pacific, where you observe a great liquid expanse, an uneasy movement troubling the surface, a seething and bubbling going on. From time to time a violent explosion occurs; here the banks slip down into the mud and are engulfed, while there you see new landmarks emerge. That is a picture of what is going on all over the world at the present moment."

For nine months Lord Curzon officiated at the Foreign Office in London while Mr Balfour remained in Paris. The work was none the less arduous because it was shared by two Chiefs instead

of being concentrated in the hands of one. "I had to preside at Cabinet this morning," he wrote on April the 8th, "Bonar having flown to Paris. C. Hardinge came to see me, very doleful about all that is going on there. Now I am about to think of something to say at my political dinner to-night. Then House of Lords. Oh! dear me, if only I could get half an hour off, fifteen minutes off, even five minutes off. But no such luck."[1] Work poured in on him in a never-ending stream—"Last night," he wrote on April the 10th, "I had my solitary dinner, and then twenty-seven boxes—the record up to date." And a week later—"Now for my miserable boxes, a regular barricade around me. When shall I get to bed?"[2] He had been inured to late hours ever since he had acquired the habit of working far into the night at Eton. But the strain which he imposed upon himself was becoming too great for tired nature to bear. "Last night I was so tired out with my post-midnight work, that I fell asleep in my red chair while writing at 1.30 a.m. and with difficulty struggled off to bed." On the afternoon of May the 10th, he wrote to Lady Curzon who had gone to Paris—"From now till 2 a.m. I shall not leave this house, but try to pull up some of my arrears. My room really looks like Hyde Park after a public-holiday, so great is the litter."

Mid-August saw him still toiling in London

> "It is 6.30," he wrote on the 19th. "We have had two Cabinets about Turkey and the East, sitting for five hours. The P.M. goes off to France to-morrow A.J.B. is in Paris pursuing one policy. I am here pursuing another. A.J.B. wants to take a holiday and me to take his place. I have declined. No one knows what ought to be done, and meanwhile, of course, nothing is done, and we go on getting deeper and deeper into the mire. Oh! how I long to get away and have a rest."

But he was not going to be let off so easily, and the question of his taking over the negotiations with Turkey was raised again the next day.

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon. [2] *Ibid.*

"This morning at the end of our third Cabinet—it lasted 3½ hours—in the last twenty-four hours, the conclusion was reached which I have all along predicted must come. The Cabinet led by the P.M. unanimously asked me to go out to Paris and take in hand the Eastern question, and *gave me authority for any settlement that I might like to effect*. I said at once that I could not go out now. I was tired out and needed my holiday and must insist on taking it. Otherwise I should be confronted with a complete breakdown. What I did offer to do, provided Balfour welcomed the idea, was to go out to Paris a month from now to explore the Turkish and Syrian questions with all the principal parties concerned, i.e., Clemenceau, Feisal, the Americans, the Italians, etc.—and then, after a fortnight or three weeks, report to the Government whether I had found the basis of a settlement or had failed . . ."[1]

With the best will in the world it was difficult for two men of such different temperament, the one in Paris, the other in London, to share control of the Foreign policy of the country. "I am heartily sick of this indeterminate position," Lord Curzon wrote on September the 9th, "possessing full powers in one set of things, but powerless in others; pursuing a definite policy here which may be thrown over any day in Paris. Few can realise the unsatisfactory and almost humiliating position of being at the same time Secretary of State and yet only a substitute."[2] Mr. Balfour was no less conscious of the difficulties of the position than Lord Curzon; and he discussed them frankly on his return from a nine months' sojourn in Paris. On September the 11th Lord Curzon conveyed the gist of the conversation in a letter to Lady Curzon. "Last night I met A. J. B. at Victoria. He appeared very white in the head, clad in the most dilapidated of suits, but in tremendous spirits, calling everyone 'old man,' and beaming all round." Lord Curzon carried him off to a *tête-à-tête* dinner at the club.

"We then walked home, came into No. 1, and he did not finally leave till 12.15 a.m. I went over everything with him.

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon, August 20th, 1919.
[2] Letter to Lady Curzon.

He is never coming back to the Foreign Office in any capacity. He does not want to go back to Paris and wishes me to do the Turkish Treaty if I can combine it with Foreign Office here. He would have resigned at once had not Lloyd George pressed him to stay. He realises that this half-and-half arrangement is hard on me; but says that he is not going to interfere in the smallest degree. I expect the change will come when Parliament meets, as he says the House of Commons will not stand his continuing to be Foreign Secretary while he never appears, and I expect that he will exchange offices with me then."

This proved correct. Mr. Balfour left the Foreign Office in October, and on the 24th of that month Lord Curzon was installed in his place. Congratulations poured in upon him.

"You have, if I may say so," wrote one who had for long been in intimate association with him, "certain capital and essential qualities, too rarely found combined, yet each and all of which are peculiarly desirable in the holder of such a position. They are conscience, intellect, information, experience, as static qualities; the habit of diligence, and the gift of expression with tongue and pen as dynamic qualities. More, I think, may be done by one man just now as Secretary of Foreign Affairs than as Prime Minister."[1]

In the Foreign Office itself and in the ranks of the Diplomatic service his regime during the months of his acting appointment had created a favourable impression and had given rise to great expectations. "I have always kept in close touch with my former colleagues in the Diplomatic Service," Major Baird informed him, "and I can tell you—what they cannot—how anxiously they hoped that your temporary control of Foreign Affairs would become permanent. What they have appreciated particularly during the past months has been that they have felt that they were serving under a Minister who not only took decisions, but himself controlled our Foreign policy."[2]

[1] Letter from Sir Herbert Warren, October 30th, 1919.

[2] Letter from Major Baird, afterwards Lord Stonehaven, Governor General of Australia, dated October 26th, 1919.

Had it been possible to write this of him at the end as at the beginning of his career as Foreign Minister, British history during the next few years might well have been written differently, and the closing years of Lord Curzon's life would not have been marred by the element of tragedy which cast its shadow over them.

But the turn which events were to take was not yet apparent, and during these months of officiating service Lord Curzon had undoubtedly made his personality felt. His conception of the importance and dignity of the office was illustrated by one of the many stories—some wholly apocryphal, others with a substratum of fact to sustain them—which were current about him. On sitting down at the desk in the Secretary of State's room for the first time, his roving eye was caught—and held—by the unobtrusive, if inoffensive, inkpot modestly inviting the first dip of his pen. Lord Curzon rang the bell. "Is this the inkpot used by previous Secretaries of State?" he asked of the expectant official who answered his summons. He was assured that it was. "But," exclaimed Lord Curzon indignantly, "his inkpot should be of crystal and silver, not glăss and brăss!" Be the story fact or fiction, it is the case that Lord Curzon did cause to be transferred to the Foreign Office one of the inkpots presented to the Privy Council by Queen Anne.

There came a day when the demands which the Foreign Secretary made upon those who served under him earned for him the disapprobation rather than the applause of the officials of the Department. But that was not yet. At this time, though he always insisted upon the highest possible standard of industry and efficiency being maintained, Lord Curzon was not altogether indifferent to the convenience of his subordinates. He admitted, in conversation with one who served under him during the war, that he doubted if Ministers ever really appreciated what they owed to the Civil Service. "We are not half grateful enough for what they do," he said. "We expect them to be always on the spot, always cheerful and attentive, at the very time when they may be having all sorts of troubles of their own; domestic worries; financial anxieties; ill-health."[1] And Mr. Clement Jones, when writing to offer his

[1] In conversation with Mr. Clement Jones, C.B., on December the 21st, 1918.

good wishes to Lord Curzon on his appointment, declared that among the large number of those who would be congratulating the Foreign Office on its good fortune none would be more pleased than the Foreign Office staff—" Of this I am convinced, not from hearsay or because I have read it in the papers, but because all my friends in the Foreign Office have told me so. One of them, who has never even been inside your room, told me only the other day what an immense change has come into the whole spirit of the place since January last." If the task which lay before the new Secretary of State was a formidable one, the auspices under which he embarked upon it were, at any rate, favourable.

CHAPTER XIII

PERSIA ONCE MORE

1919

The period during which Lord Curzon officiated at the Foreign Office before being definitely appointed Secretary of State, was marked by one distinct if short-lived success. On assuming the direction of affairs in London, he had at once turned his gaze eastwards to those lands where his heart always lay ; for, if he was oppressed with a sense of the overwhelming difficulty of restoring peace in Europe, he was also filled with growing apprehension as he caught echoes of the world's unrest reverberating ominously round the whispering-galleries of Asia.

> " The world is very troubled," he wrote on September the 21st, 1919, " and while peace is supposed to have been secured, active and murderous warfare is going on in at least a quarter of the recent areas of struggle. And, if this is the case in Europe, the situation in Asia is worse, and will not subside for a generation. In these circumstances the task of Government is full of incident, but even fuller of disappointment and perplexity " [1]

And as he gazed curiously over the constantly changing kaleidoscope of the Near and Middle East, his eyes came to rest finally upon Persia—that magnetic land of mystery and romance over whose dusty plateaux and through whose ancient cities, crumbling uncared-for into inert but picturesque decay, he had travelled all

[1] Letter to Lord Lansdowne.

but thirty years before. Persia that had provided him with material for the most monumental of all his books ; the decrepit descendant of a mighty nation into whose veins he had striven so hard throughout the seven years of his Viceroyalty to infuse the blood of a new vitality. And, finding himself at last in a position not merely to formulate, but to enforce a policy, he was determined to make a supreme effort to drag her from the slough into which she had fallen, and to make of her what he had always dreamed that, with the benevolent co-operation of Great Britain, she might some day become—a worthy successor to the kingdom of Cyrus and a strong link in a chain of friendly States, stretching from the confines of Europe to the frontier of the Indian Empire.

It was all part of a perfectly definite and logical policy which had taken shape with his first glance at the political map of Asia while still a boy at Eton, and had remained clear-cut in his mind ever since. It rested upon a single and quite simple conception—the creation of a chain of buffer states stretching from the northern confines of India to the Mediterranean sea, to serve as a screen, giving protection against attack to India and the great arterial line of communication between Great Britain at one end and Australia, New Zealand and the Far East at the other. That the source of possible attack had changed, made no difference to the policy ; it remained valid whether the potential aggressor was Russia, as it had long been, or Germany, as it had more recently become. And, with this urgent necessity always in mind, he had laid constant stress throughout the war upon the importance of the Eastern theatre. His view was summed up comprehensively in an Address to members of the Imperial War Cabinet during the critical summer of 1918.

From this Address it is clear that, if others had dismissed from mind certain early indications of the real nature of the ambitions which were revolving in the fertile brain of the German Emperor, Lord Curzon at least had not done so. He had stored them in his memory ready to be produced when evidence was required. Such were the visits of the Kaiser to the Turkish Capital and to Palestine during the closing decade of the nineteenth century These spectacular pilgrimages had naturally excited comment at the time. People had wondered vaguely why an Emperor of Germany should

wish to visit Constantinople and to take under his patronage the feeble and tottering power of the Ottoman Turk. And curiosity, which had remained unsatisfied in 1893, had been revived when some years later, clad in a flowing white robe, he had ridden dramatically through the streets of Jerusalem and Bethlehem in the spirit of a crusader and then, incongruously enough, had proceeded to Damascus to address a great gathering and proclaim himself the one and only friend among the Western Powers of the Followers of the Prophet. As time went on people had become accustomed to the theatrical in the Emperor William and had discounted the significance of such displays. Not so Lord Curzon. In the course of his Address he begged those who listened to him not to lose sight, in their anxiety over events on the Western front, of the rapidly growing importance which the collapse of Russia had given to the Eastern theatre. Let them consider the trend of German world policy as directed by William the Second. These almost forgotten gestures with which he had excited the amused interest of Europe a quarter of a century ago had been fraught with a wide and sinister purpose. They had been made in pursuance of a policy designed to place Turkey "in ultimate political and economic bondage to Germany." They had heralded the laying of "the first stones of the causeway that was to lead him to the ultimate conquest of the East... They were the premonitory symptoms of the policy that was impending. The thread upon which all the strings were to be woven together was the Baghdad Railway, which was to place at the disposal of Germany the resources of Asia Minor and to take the Germans by easy stages to the head of the Persian Gulf and the frontiers of India"[1]

This particular line of advance had now been blocked, thanks to the success of our arms in Palestine and Mesopotamia—not "sideshows," as they were sometimes called, even by highly-placed military authorities; but campaigns undertaken "for direct military and political advantages of the most obvious nature." But, with the collapse of Russia, a new avenue of approach had been opened up *via* the Caucasus. And, with his customary lucidity, Lord Curzon explained the dangers to which this new disposition of the pieces

[1]Address at a meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet on June the 25th, 1918.

on the chess-board of the Middle East gave rise. And, finally, he asked his audience, bearing in mind the long-cherished aspirations of the German Emperor, to consider the immense significance of all that he had placed before them. The narrative of events which he had given them meant that Germany, if she were baffled in the West, either as the result of military operations, or even as the result of peace, would turn toward the East.

> "She can afford to give up everything she has won in Western parts, in France and Flanders, if only this door in the East remains open to her. If peace proposals were made now and the representatives of the Powers were seated at a Peace Conference table, Germany could, I venture to submit to you, afford to give back Belgium, to make large concessions in respect of Alsace-Lorraine . . . . and she would still have the illimitable range of future ambition and opportunity which I have been describing."

British statesmanship could never afford to lose sight of the fact that under the inspiration of William the Second the destruction of the British Empire had become an obsession with the German governing classes. The centre of British power in the Eastern world was India—

> "and it is at India, along these lines of advance that I have been describing, that Germany is striking. And, observe, that if she is unsuccessful now, if she does not push her forces right forward as she is trying to do, or if she is held up by our efforts, the object will not be abandoned, but the attempt will be renewed."

How, he asked in conclusion, was this supreme and imminent danger to be countered? Neither Germany nor her Allies must ever again be permitted to occupy Palestine or Mesopotamia; every effort must be made to re-create Russia—"even though it may take ten years or twenty years"—as a bulwark against German penetration toward India; and, finally, "we must endeavour by

every means in our power to secure a friendly Persia and a loyal Afghanistan."

The Address, of which the above is a brief summary, was delivered by Lord Curzon as Chairman of a Committee appointed by the Prime Minister to assist the War Cabinet in formulating their policy in Asia. It was natural that under his guidance the rejuvenation of Persia should play a prominent part in the programme drawn up by the Committee. And Lord Curzon was urgent in pressing it upon the attention of his colleagues. The problem had not become easier with the passage of time. One of the grounds on which he had criticised the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 had been the indifference displayed by its authors to Persian sentiment.[1] Criticism on this ground had been justified by events. From the day of its signature Great Britain had been tarred in the eyes of Persia with the Russian brush. This view of the Agreement between two Powers hitherto at daggers drawn was natural enough. It was fortified by the attitude of the Russian representative at Tehran who, finding himself in the enjoyment of a happy immunity from British criticism, became a virtual Dictator in all matters affecting Russian interests in Northern Persia. And, while British statesmen of all parties were as truly anxious as they had always been to build up, establish and fortify the independence and integrity of Persia, the disintegrating years of war had driven them to action which had inevitably given colour to the view that, with the enactment of the Convention, they had adopted Russian aims and Russian methods.

During the war the British Government had, in fact, been compelled in self-defence to undertake considerable military operations on Persian soil; so that just when the curtain was rung down on the battle fields of Europe, it was rung up on a Persia picketted on all sides with British forces. In the East there was a cordon of troops running up from the Persian Gulf in the south to Khorasan in the north, serving as a screen in front of the Indian and Afghan frontiers. In the West a similar cordon stretched from Baghdad through Kermanshah and Hamadan to the Caspian; while Southern Persia was dominated by a local force known as the South Persia Rifles,

[1] See chapter II, p. 44.

raised and officered by British soldiers for the very necessary duty of controlling the insurrectionary movements to which the uncertainties of the times had given rise. Finally, based on the capital itself, were the so-called Persian Cossacks, led by Russian officers, but now—so oddly unexpected a shake had Time given to his glass—paid from the coffers of Great Britain.

The measure of comparative security which Great Britain had thus acquired against the threatened break-up of a kingdom lying on the frontier of her Indian Empire, had only been achieved at heavy financial cost. The policing of the country was a heavy, but not the only, item of expenditure in the bill which she found herself called upon to pay. In addition, large subventions had been necessary to stave off actual bankruptcy; and a careful survey of the position at the end of 1918 disclosed the fact that her commitments in Persia alone were responsible for an outlay of no less than £30,000,000 a year.

It must have been at least as obvious to the Persians themselves, as it was to every other observer, that, but for British money, their Treasury would have been empty; and, but for the presence of British armed forces, the more virile tribes amongst them would have been in a state of explosive insurrection. Knowledge of these things did not, however, render a state of affairs under which the virtual control of the country had passed into the hands of Great Britain more palatable to the Persian Government. And it is not surprising that among the members of the Eastern Committee and their advisers, as they contemplated their commitments and the staringly inadequate advantages in the shape of Persian co-operation which they were receiving in return, there should have been some who thought that we should without delay withdraw our troops, cease our subsidies and, as one of them bluntly put it, "leave Persia to go to the devil in her own way."

Lord Curzon was not among them. "I take it," he declared, when summing up the situation at a meeting of the Committee on December the 30th, 1918, "that this policy (i.e. that of withdrawing from Persia) would please the Persians better than any other; but I submit to this Committee that it would be immoral, feeble and disastrous." Important as it always had been to ensure the stability

of a country lying on the Indian frontier, it was doubly important now that on the west Mesopotamia had also become a definite British interest. " You have the situation now," he pointed out, "that Persia, instead of being a solitary figure moving about in a chronic state of disorder on the glacis of the Indian fortress, has the Indian frontier on one side of her and what is tantamount to a British frontier on the other." He hoped, therefore, that his colleagues would spend " not five seconds more of thought " in deciding that a policy of retreat was, in the circumstances of the case, impracticable.

It had been suggested in some quarters that we should continue our subsidies and maintain our troops, but should humour the Persian Government, address them with deference, convince them, if that were possible, that we had no other desire than to place ourselves and our resources at their disposal; in short, that " while we remained a financial support, we did not wish to be a political nuisance." In theory such a policy had much to recommend it; but in practice it was almost certain to prove abortive, and it was rejected by all the authorities who spoke with first-hand knowledge of the country.

What, then, was left? The possibility that Great Britain might be invited to act as the Mandatory of the Powers, or of a League of Nations, was too remote to have much bearing on the immediate situation. " I am not at all clear myself that the demand will ever be made upon us. It is by no means certain that Mandatories are going to be created. Before you settle whether there are going to be Mandatory Powers all over the world, you have to constitute the League of Nations to give the invitation." What he himself would suggest was that the Persian representatives, who were understood to be on their way to Europe with the intention of knocking at the door of the Peace Conference, should be addressed with the complete frankness that the case demanded. Such frankness need not be of " a purely minatory character." We could go a long way towards meeting some at least of what were believed to be Persian aspirations. Assurances as to the independence and integrity of the country we should be willing to renew in the most explicit terms. The hated Anglo-Russian Convention we should be only

too glad to abrogate. As to the creation of a national army, that was a thing which we had long since advocated, and in the formation of which we should be willing, subject only to one condition, heartily to co-operate. No such force would have the smallest chance of coming into existence without the aid of a cadre of European officers ; and while we should require as a condition of our assistance the appointment of a British officer at the head of the organisation, we should raise no objection to officers of other nationalities being engaged to serve under him. A happy precedent for such an arrangement was to be found in the Customs Administration of China, which, while manned by persons of many nationalities, had for years been under the supreme control of Sir Robert Hart. Then the huge financial stake which we now possessed in the country made it necessary that there should be a British Financial Adviser at the head of affairs at the Capital, and on that point we could take no refusal. If the Persians accepted these terms, we should at once set to work to assist the Persian Government in putting their house in order. In the event of their proving obdurate they should be told that all subsidies would cease, a settlement of all outstanding claims would be demanded, and that for the future Persia must work out her own salvation relying upon her own unaided resources.

In the Minutes of the meeting at which Lord Curzon expounded this policy occurs the following entry : " The Committee were generally in favour of the policy recommended by the Chairman and Lord Robert Cecil." And armed with this authority, Lord Curzon, as soon as he was established at the Foreign Office, embarked upon the negotiations which led, in the course of the summer of 1919, to the Anglo-Persian Treaty.

How completely the policy of the Government in these matters was the policy of Lord Curzon is clear from correspondence which passed between him and Mr. Montagu after the meeting of the Eastern Committee to which reference has been made. The divergence of view between the Secretary of State for India and Lord Curzon, which had first disclosed itself in connection with the Indian Reform scheme, was wont to assert itself whenever questions of British policy in Asia came up for decision. It was to

a large extent a matter of temperament. The two men viewed matters from widely different standpoints. But there was also a certain antagonism between them which neither was ever able wholly to overcome, and which ended three years later in an open breach, and the disappearance of Mr. Montagu from the Government. His dissent from Lord Curzon's Persian policy was summed up in a letter dated January the 6th—

> "I am sorry to have to bother you with further correspondence, but I really feel so alarmed about some aspects of Eastern affairs that I am compelled to write to you. . . . I notice in the draft Minutes (of the Eastern Committee) a statement that the Committee agreed with the Chairman. Surely you will not allow this to stand, for the situation was this. Mr. Balfour was away; I was away; I do not see it recorded that the C.I.G.S. was present; Lord Robert Cecil (I don't know whether he is a member of the Committee or not now) had left before he had heard either Sir Hamilton Grant or Sir Arthur Hirtzel, and therefore the Committee consisted of the Chairman; and the Chairman, of course, not unnaturally agreed with the Chairman."

He proceeded to explain his objection to the proposal that the reorganised Persian army should be placed under a British Commander-in-Chief. Such a suggestion, he thought, was "unnecessarily offensive to the Persian Government and national feeling." And, apart from this specific proposal, he regarded the whole tone of Lord Curzon's intended exposition of the British view of the situation as unduly minatory and dictatorial.

> "Lastly, I cannot regard the policy of the Eastern Committee with regard to Persia as satisfactory unless a genuine attempt is made to put our position in Persia on a footing satisfactory to the Persians by re-establishing their confidence in us as being anxious to help but not desirous to control. I have warned the Eastern Committee more than once of the grave difficulty which I am experiencing, and which I shall experience

more and more in the future, of getting contributions from Indian revenues to expenditure in Persia. I cannot honestly make the attempt in future if the policy is one in which neither the India Office nor the Government of India concur."

Matters turned out much as Lord Curzon had foreseen and hoped. A Persian delegation reached Paris, knocked boldly but vainly at the door of the Peace Conference, and, disappointed of any hopes of success which they may have cherished in this direction, turned a chastened ear to the suggestions which Great Britain had to offer. In Tehran itself, with an Anglo-phil Ministry in power under the control of a leading Persian statesman of conservative views, Vossug-ed-Dowleh, and with the representation of British interests in the capable hands of Sir Percy Cox—the officer who nearly twenty years before had been specially selected by Lord Curzon himself to take charge of matters in the Persian Gulf—negotiations proceeded with gratifying success: so much so that, early in August Lord Curzon was able to inform the Cabinet that an Agreement had been reached. The terms of the Treaty which had thus been successfully negotiated were made public a few days later, and Lord Curzon eagerly scanned the papers for their verdict upon his achievement. There was ready approval of the Treaty, but little mention of its author, an omission which Lord Curzon was quick to notice.

"The papers give a very good reception to my Persian Treaty, which I have been negotiating for the past year, and which is a great triumph, as I have done it all alone. But not a single paper so much as mentions my name or has the dimmest perception that, had I not been at the Foreign Office, it would never have been at all."[1]

Great credit was, indeed, due to Lord Curzon for the successful outcome of the negotiations. In the course of them he had succeeded in bridging the differences by which in the earlier stages he and the Secretary of State for India had been divided. In their final form,

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon, August 17th, 1919.

he told the Cabinet, the provisions of the Agreement had the approval of Mr. Montagu and Mr. Chamberlain in London, and of Mr. Balfour in Paris. And he gave a brief summary of their effect.

> "What they mean in practice is this: not that we have received or are about to receive a Mandate for Persia; not that Persia has handed over to us any part of her liberties; not that we are assuming fresh and costly obligations which will place a great strain upon us in the future; but that the Persian Government, realising that we are the only neighbouring great Power closely interested in the fate of Persia, able and willing to help her and likely to be disinterested in that object, have decided of their own free will to ask us to assist Persia in the rehabilitation of her fortunes."[1]

The Treaty was, in fact, a simple and straightforward document, the gist of which was the loan by Great Britain to Persia of such expert advisers as might be thought desirable by the Governments of the two countries in consultation; the provision by Great Britain of the officers, munitions and equipment required for the creation of a national army—the question of a British Commander-in-Chief being left open for further consideration; and, in order to provide the Persian Government with funds for financing these reforms, an additional loan by the British Treasury of £2,000,000, to be secured on the Persian customs. The Government of Great Britain agreed further to give support to approved schemes for the construction of roads and railways by Anglo-Persian enterprise, and to the appointment of a joint committee of experts to revise the Persian Customs Tariff in a direction favourable to Persia. These provisions were subject to the reiteration by the British Government of the undertakings frequently given by them in the past, "to respect absolutely the independence and integrity of Persia."

The conclusion of the Treaty was celebrated at a dinner given in London in honour of Prince Nosret-ed-Dowleh, one of the foremost statesmen of Persia who had proceeded to England in advance of the Shah, whose proposed visit to Great Britain was to take place

[1]From a Memorandum written for the Cabinet on August 9th, 1919.

in the autumn. With his flair for stage management, Lord Curzon realised the importance of making the occasion a success.

> "If you can come up to the Government dinner which we are giving to the Persian Foreign Minister on Thursday next to boom the Agreement and to applaud him (he is one of the triumvirate who have concluded it) please do so. It is very difficult to collect people now."[1]

His own speech at the dinner gave a lucid account of the negotiations leading up to the conclusion of the Treaty and of the objects of the Treaty itself. For the student of Lord Curzon's personality it possesses a special interest, for it provides a striking example of that fixity of ideas which was one of his outstanding characteristics. The views which he had formed while still a boy at Eton, of Persia's place in Asia and of the policy which Great Britain should adopt towards her, had never varied. At the age of thirty-four they had been repeated, emphasised, elaborated in his book on Persia; at the age of forty he had begun the sustained attempt to give effect to them which had lasted throughout the period of his Viceroyalty. The attempt had been interrupted but not banished by the conclusion in 1907 of the Anglo-Russian Convention; and with the opportunity which had now presented itself of brushing aside that instrument, it had been vigorously renewed.

> "I was never an ardent admirer of the Anglo-Russian Convention," he told his audience. "On the contrary, I criticised it severely in Parliament and elsewhere. . . . I regard that Agreement as dead. It is only owing to the fact that there has been for some time no Russian Government with whom we were in relations and to whom we could turn, that we have not sought its definite abrogation. But, in my judgment—and I speak probably for the Russians as well as myself—that Agreement may be regarded as having been wiped off the slate. I do not believe that anything like it is likely to be resuscitated by the Government of my country."

[1] Letter to Lord Lamington, September 13th, 1919.

This unhappy interruption in the traditional policy of Great Britain towards Persia having been brought to an end, Lord Curzon passed on to a profession of his own faith in the historic continuity of the relations between the two countries.

> "I have always been a sincere and outspoken friend of Persian nationality. I regard Persia as a country with a great history and a romantic past, one of the few surviving independent Muhammadan States of the world, which it is of vital interest not only to ourselves, but to Asia, to keep alive. I know that country and the people to be possessed of marked individuality and national spirit, too ardent to be suppressed, too valuable to be submerged. Was it not natural that Persia, seeking to establish and stabilise her future, should turn to us? Our boundaries march with hers for hundreds of miles on her southern frontier. For a century we have pacified and policed the Gulf. At Mesopotamia we shall presently be her neighbour on the West. It is an obvious interest to us to have a peaceful and prosperous Persia; and, as regards Persia herself, if it be true—and I do not think the most ardent Persian patriot will deny it—that external assistance of some sort is necessary for her, is it not natural that it should be to this country that she should turn?"

On the whole Lord Curzon was satisfied with the way in which things had passed off. "Yesterday night," he told Lady Curzon in a letter written on September the 19th, "I presided at the Carlton over a dinner to the Persian Foreign Minister—over sixty people—and I made what I believe was regarded as a successful speech about the Anglo-Persian Agreement."

The negotiations for a Treaty satisfactory to Great Britain and of obvious advantage to Persia had thus been brought to a successful issue. Yet Lord Curzon's hopes that he was at last to see realised—and that through his own efforts—the dreams which he had long dreamed, of a rejuvenated Persia freed from the menace of Russian militarism on the north and supported by, and beholden to, Great Britain, were once more doomed to disappointment. The story of failure is told in two speeches delivered by him in the House of

Lords on November the 16th, 1920, and July the 26th, 1921. And it will be convenient to anticipate a little the chronological sequence of events in order to complete the narrative of what was but an episode certainly, but none the less an important episode in the history of Lord Curzon's Foreign Administration.

For some months after the conclusion of the Treaty all went well. The Shah, during his visit to England in the autumn of 1919, gave expression to his cordial acceptance of its provisions. A Military Commission under General Dickson proceeded to Persia to examine the military situation with a view to making recommendations for the creation of a national army ; an able Treasury official, Mr. Armitage Smith, headed a Financial Commission charged with the task of reorganising the country's finances ; two consulting engineers were despatched in an advisory capacity, and a Persian syndicate was formed for the survey of railway lines in different parts of the kingdom.

The summer of 1920 was, however, a troubled one for Persia, and progress with the reforms was brought to a standstill by convulsions within and aggression from without her borders. The forces of the new and aggressive Communism, which had sprung to life out of the decay amid which the Russian social system had sunk to disintegration, suddenly spilled over from the Caucasus, swamped the Province of Azerbaijan which became a Soviet Republic, and sweeping simultaneously down the Volga, obtained the naval mastery of the Caspian sea. The situation in which the Shah and his Government found themselves, in face of this new menace, was rendered more precarious by the attitude of the Russian officers still in command of the Persian Cossacks, which was so equivocal as to determine the Shah to dispense with their services.

It is never an easy task to unravel the tangled skeins of Persian internal politics, and it is sufficient to take note of the fact, without seeking the reason, that within a short time of the return of the Shah from Europe, Vossug-ed-Dowleh, the Prime Minister and part author of the Treaty, resigned. He was succeeded by Mushir-ed-Dowleh at the head of a more distinctively Nationalist Ministry, which decided to regard the Treaty as in suspense until the consent of the Medjliss, or Parliament, had been accorded to it.

Here, then, was the first definite indication that the Persian people might yet reject the co-operation of Great Britain which seemed so necessary to their future welfare.

> "I thought myself," exclaimed Lord Curzon, "that it was rather a pedantic and foolish policy on the part of the Persian Government to deny themselves the enormous advantages of the Agreement by which they had already begun to profit. But that was their business rather than ours, and so anxious were we to obtain the approval of the Medjliss, that we acquiesced in the policy, provided only that the Parliament was itself summoned at an early date and the Agreement submitted to it."[1]

The note of pessimism that ran through the speech proved only too well founded. With the fall from power of Vossug-ed-Dowleh, Persia relapsed into a state of traditional instability. Ministries rose and fell with monotonous regularity; and while five different Governments made their entries and their exits, the Medjliss remained unsummoned and, consequently, impotent. Persian respect for Great Britain ebbed with the final withdrawal of British troops from northern Persia; and as her respect for Britain ebbed, so did her fear of Soviet Russia grow. And the fruit of this psychological process quickly ripened. In February, 1921, a new Treaty was entered into between the Persian Government and the Soviet authorities at Moscow.

With this *dénouement* may be said to have been brought down finally to the ground the policy for the regeneration of an Oriental State, which had been with Lord Curzon not the expedient of the moment brought into being by the ephemeral circumstances of the day, but the preoccupation of a lifetime. Persia by her attitude had made her own choice. She had deliberately rejected the chance of recovering her own fortunes with British aid. She had preferred to fall back upon the familiar game of playing off Russia against Great Britain, and in the last resort she appeared to be not unwilling to accept the caresses of the Soviet Government. Over his perished hopes Lord Curzon sang a mournful requiem—

[1] Speech in the House of Lords, November 16th, 1920.

"The picture that I have drawn has been the picture of a country with a great and historic past, a country for which we have had the warmest sympathy, for which we have made countless sacrifices and upon which we have spent many millions of money since the beginning of the war; but it is a country which now appears to be marching of its own accord, with deliberate and logical steps, towards an end which I do not attempt to forecast, but which cannot, I think, be other than most unfortunate. I wish I could have given a more roseate account of Persia or a more sanguine estimate of the situation than I have been able to do. Of all the speeches that I have ever had to make upon Persia—and they have been many—the one which I make this afternoon has been delivered with the greatest regret." [1]

[1] Speech in the House of Lords, July 26th, 1921

CHAPTER XIV

FRANCE AND GREAT BRITAIN

1920–1921

So long as the conduct of the Peace negotiations was in other hands, Lord Curzon was able to devote a large share of his attention to those Eastern problems which always bulked so large on the horizon of his mind. But when, in October 1919, Mr. Balfour withdrew from the Foreign Office, he found himself confronted with a host of difficulties nearer home to which, whether he would or not, he was obliged to turn his mind.

Once before—when at long last he had become a Cabinet Minister—disillusionment had come upon him with something of a shock. Now, as he gathered the strings of British foreign policy into his own hands, he was assailed once more with feelings of acute disappointment. Neither the position of the Foreign Minister, nor the part which he was called upon to play, bore any resemblance to the picture which he had painted of them in those far-off Oxford days, which had slipped imperceptibly but inexorably into the limbo of the past. The conception of the Foreign Secretary and his work which he had formed in those days, had been based on his study of the personalities and times of Palmerston and Disraeli. The story of British Foreign Policy as he had read it had been one of " dazzling strokes of policy, of baffled rivals and discomfited opponents; of perpetual shouting of challenges and waving of flags."[1] He himself would have been an impressive figure on such a stage as

[1]Statement on Foreign policy made by Lord Curzon to Representatives of the United Kingdom, British Dominions and India, on June the 22nd, 1921.

Palmerston and Disraeli trod. Even as Under Secretary during Lord Salisbury's tenure of the Foreign Office, he had exhibited impatience at a Foreign Policy conducted in what he had regarded as a minor key. And the post-war policy of Great Britain had inevitably to be conducted in a minor key. If there was one thing more than another that had to be excluded from it, it was " the perpetual shouting of challenges and waving of flags." Caution rather than brilliance, self-abnegation rather than assertion, were the qualities which the sombre circumstances of the time demanded in the direction of the country's Foreign Policy. " We have, as I read the lessons of the time," he declared, " to keep what we have obtained, sometimes almost against our will; not to seize anything else; to reconcile, not defy; to pacify, not to conquer."[1]

On the other hand, a policy of splendid isolation was no longer possible even if it had been desirable. Great Britain had been sucked into the vortex of the European maelstrom and she could not afford to stand aside now that the task of salvage was being taken in hand. The gigantic work of reconstruction could only be carried through by continued co-operation between the Great Powers who had won the war and who were now trying to gain the peace. Decisions of momentous consequence had constantly to be taken; but they were not the decisions of this Power or of that Power, but of four Great Powers acting, or at least attempting to act, in unison. In such circumstances frequent consultation was unavoidable. " The papers are fond of deriding the meetings of the so-called Supreme Council," Lord Curzon observed. " The Supreme Council is merely a name given to the Allied Conferences held from time to time of the Representatives of the Four Great Powers."[2]

This constant meeting for consultation—the necessity of an unprecedented situation—was a feature of his work as Foreign Secretary which Lord Curzon himself disliked. " Believe me," he declared, " it is no particular enjoyment to those who take part in these Conferences to have to attend them. They break up one's Parliamentary and public life and duties at home; they take one for indefinite periods to foreign countries; they involve long, com-

[1] Statement on June 22nd, 1921. [2] *Ibid.*

plicated and sometimes vexatious discussions." But he saw no possible alternative—" for the time being they are the only means of maintaining the peace of Europe and recovering the lost equilibrium of the world."[1]

And if no one realised more surely than Lord Curzon that the keystone of the arch on which the ruins of continental Europe must be rebuilt was the closest possible union between Great Britain and France, no one was more acutely conscious of the difficulty of maintaining so intimate a relationship. There were differences inherent in the history, the mentality and the national character of the two peoples. And, apart altogether from these differences of a fundamental nature, it was inevitable, in the circumstances of the case, that the French view of the German problem should differ essentially from the British view of it. It was true enough that while the war lasted the feelings of the British people had been deeply stirred against Germany. Her conduct had excited in their minds burning anger and righteous indignation.

> " But we are the kind of people who, although fierce in conflict, are not lasting in resentment or bitter in revenge, and when the war was over, more particularly when our signatures had been placed to the Peace Treaty and we had a German Ambassador back in London, I believe there was not one of us who was not quite content, to the best of his ability, to wipe out the past, to start again on a new basis, and gradually to build up relations which in time may be those of friendship in the future."[2]

With France it was not so. Great as had been our own sufferings, the sufferings of the French people had been infinitely greater. Her losses on the battlefield had been larger; vast tracts of what had been smiling and prosperous country still lay ravished and mouldering to ruin before her eyes. And, above all, in the case of France there still remained, unaffected by the Treaty wrung from Germany, the apprehension of an open frontier on the East. Hence it was that she snatched at every opportunity for the military occupation of

[1] Statement on June 22nd, 1921. [2] *Ibid.*

German territory across the Rhine. The supreme task confronting British diplomacy in Europe was, consequently, that of exercising a restraining influence upon France. The delicacy and difficulty of the task were being constantly illustrated. Early in 1920 the violation of the neutral zone by Germany in the course of operations forced upon her by a Communist outbreak in the Ruhr, led France —in spite of the advice of the British Government to the contrary— to occupy Frankfurt and four other German towns. Later on the British Government had been reluctantly persuaded to agree to the occupation of three towns at the entrance of the Ruhr Valley. And Lord Curzon was apprehensive of further projects for the occupation of German territory; for mixed with French fears he thought that he discerned certain well-defined ambitions which loomed large in the mind of the French Chamber, whose sentiments the French Government were unable to ignore. Elected after the war, the Deputies certainly appeared to reflect the mood of triumphant aggressiveness induced in the French people by the sudden turn in the tide of battle which had opened up a dazzling prospect of scarcely hoped for victory in the autumn of 1918. Fear of defeat had been succeeded by the amazing realisation of victory, and the reaction was not more extreme than was to be expected in a people of the Latin race. Moreover, the goal of French chauvinism was a sufficiently alluring one. With Lorraine, the Saar Valley and the Ruhr in her grasp, she would become the mistress of Europe in respect of coal, iron and steel; and with those countries under her military control she would become the military Dictator of the Continent.

At all these many Conferences, consequently, to which, as Lord Curzon once remarked, he looked back " with a shudder almost of horror," the task of the representatives of Great Britain, if difficult and uninspiring, was at least clear. They had first and last to restrain France from such action as might precipitate a fresh outbreak of war. The task was rendered all the more difficult by the failure of the German Government to execute the Treaty to which their representatives had appended their reluctant signatures. Lord Curzon, though he sometimes lost patience with what he regarded as the ineptitude of successive German Governments, was usually ready

to make allowances for the difficulties of their position. In 1920 they held precariously to office between the Scylla of Communism on the one side and the Charybdis of Monarchical reaction on the other. And at any moment the patient and painstaking work of British diplomacy at the Conference table was liable to be upset by news of a German internal crisis.

> " Our Foreign Office is upside down," Lord Curzon wrote on March the 12th, 1920. " There is a Monarchical revolution in Berlin ! Feisal has been proclaimed King of Syria ! The Egyptians have declared their independence ! One needs nerves of steel to stand this strain—all the more that the Powers are not acting loyally together. I am here (in London) over Sunday and shall be too busy to stir out." [1]

The Monarchical revolution—the Kapp " Putsch," as it came to be spoken of—flared up and then petered out, a flickering rush-light where a flaming torch had been intended ; but this and similar troubles provided the German Government with an excuse for their own dilatoriness in discharging their obligations to the Allies. And their failure to do so, whether due to impotence or to deliberate evasion, provided France in her turn with undeniable justification for a policy of aggression. Over and over again the fate of Europe trembled in the balance while men of strangely different temperament and outlook argued endlessly round the Conference table.

From fragmentary descriptions contained in letters and occasional speeches it is possible to construct an interesting picture of the proceedings behind the closed doors of these fateful gatherings. And, against a background of grave international discussion, carried on between the flock-papered walls of the rococo buildings of various continental resorts, are to be seen delineated the likenesses of two men—two men thrown by Fate into intimate association, but standing in all that makes for personality as far as the poles asunder.

> " I have a big fight on presently—at 4 p.m.—at the Allied Conference," Lord Curzon wrote on March the 24th, 1920.

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon.

"I had to ring up P.M. just now, 3.20 p.m., at Walton Heath. Reply came that he is fast asleep in bed. Extraordinary man! I wish I could sometimes get to bed or to sleep except at 3 a.m."[1]

That was Lord Curzon's trouble. All his life he had lived at high pressure, driving body and mind relentlessly to the utmost limit of endurance. And now, with the pressure remorselessly maintained, the mechanism gave increasingly ominous signs of wear and tear. "I am so dead beat," he wrote one day in August 1920, "that I fell asleep after dinner and can only just pull myself together to write this."[2] More often his complaint was of inability to sleep. "I tried to sleep without any drugs," he wrote on another occasion. "No good—awake 11.30 to 2.30. Then I took a mild chloral and got about two hours' light sleep, the first for ten days; then awake again till 8.30 a.m."[3] Yet warnings were no more heeded now than they had ever been. "On Wednesday night," he wrote in reference to his departure from London for one of the many conferences in Paris, "I did not get to bed till 3.20 a.m.—so much to do before starting."[4]

Mid-April of the year 1920 saw him at San Remo—"a very poor sort of place confined in a very narrow strip between the hills and the sea, much less tidy and spick-and-span than the French Riviera." Outside the hotel in which the British Delegation were quartered, big Italian gendarmes in heavy black uniforms and cocked hats patrolled the paths, and there was "an eternal twitter of the engines of Italian motors, which seem to make quite a different noise from any other."[5] He was oppressed by the nature of his surroundings; by the constant presence of the gendarmes—"of whom there are six hundred walking about and dogging us as though we were criminals"; by the pressing attentions of the photographers—"of whom there must be thousands"; by the pressmen and the crowds of interested people from every land under the sun—Syrians, Zionists, Armenians, Poles, Ukrainians, Chaldeans, everyone who wanted to influence the Conference. "They take rooms in the same

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon [2] *Ibid*
[3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.* [5] *Ibid*

hotel as we are in and they dog our footsteps wherever we go." The one cause for satisfaction was the discovery that his bed-room was equipped both with venetian blinds and with shutters—so that he hoped to be able to sleep at nights.[1]

The Conference met for discussion on April the 18th. "We had our first meeting in a great showy, pretentious villa high up on the hills behind, called Villa Devachon. It was built by an Earl of Mexborough, who was, I believe, a Buddhist. After his death it was bought by a rich Italian." He noted with interest the attitude of the chief delegates—"Nitti in the chair, very affable and bland. Millerand quite subdued; Lloyd George rather taking the lead." The earlier sittings, while the Conference was settling down and its members getting to know one another, were devoted to consideration of some of the smaller matters on which decisions were required. The discussions which took place were sufficient to show that even on matters of comparatively minor importance it was not always easy for men of such different personality to find common ground. Nor were the differences always between the delegations of the countries represented at the Conference; there were occasions on which the members of a delegation differed amongst themselves.

Outside the Conference Room the delegates met in excellent spirits. "In the evening he (Lloyd George) gave a dinner to Millerand, Berthelot and Co. Lots of good stories were told. A.J.B. talked atrocious French with perfect imperturbability. The P.M. was in tearing spirits." And so long as the big question—the German problem—was kept in the background all went well. "We have made pretty good progress with our work," Lord Curzon wrote at the end of the second day, "and the members of the Conference, who now know each other well, get on excellently. But some of the biggest questions have not yet been faced." And when he wrote on April the 24th, the main question was still untouched. "Foch at dinner was most interesting, so precise, emphatic, almost epigrammatic in speech"; but—"We have not got to the discussion about Germany yet. It is always hanging over our heads." So difficult was the task of the British Delegation, where Franco-

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon.

German relations were concerned, that the ex-Foreign Secretary was called in for consultation. " A.J.B. turned up last night from Cannes," Lord Curzon wrote on April the 21st, " for a discussion about policy *re* Germany, and is going to stay till we go. He is writing a book, and says it does not matter whether he writes it here or anywhere else." And under the shadow of this cloud the Conference lost something of its initial buoyancy. " Lloyd George has fits of impetuosity at the Conference which sometimes take him in the right direction, sometimes in the wrong. The French are depressed and take little part. . . ."

In these circumstances it is not surprising that the San Remo Conference should have dispersed with many of the most important questions still unsolved. The fact of the matter was that the relations between the French and British Governments had been seriously strained by the independent action of the former—to which reference has been made—in occupying Frankfurt and the four other German towns across the Rhine. Lord Curzon himself had been greatly incensed by the action of the French and Belgians, and had spoken his mind very plainly in his conversations with the Ambassadors of those two countries. It must be admitted that he was not without grounds for his irritation. For six weeks he had been presiding over an Allied Conference in London. Over and over again during those six weeks decisions had been postponed owing to the refusal of M. Millerand to give the French Ambassador plenipotentiary powers either in great things or in small. And then, during the opening days of April, Lord Curzon had learned, not through the ordinary official channels, but through reports in the newspapers, that without warning and in defiance of the plainly expressed wishes of their Allies, France and Belgium had embarked upon what he regarded as their rash adventure.

The gravity of the situation which had thus been created is clear from the tone of the conversations which took place between Lord Curzon and the French Ambassador, as reported by the former to Lord Derby, at that time British Ambassador in Paris.

> " The French Ambassador called upon me by appointment at noon to-day. I had just received a series of telegrams—

reporting the action of the French Government, both in Paris and Berlin, in relation to the German request to be allowed to send troops into the Ruhr valley—which revealed a state of affairs so surprising and so disquieting that I seized the opportunity to speak to M. Cambon at once upon the subject. Only yesterday, at the meeting of the Allied Conference, when I mentioned the persistent rumours in the newspapers that M. Millerand had been dealing separately with the German representative in Paris and had made proposals or used threats about the French occupation of Frankfurt and Darmstadt, M. Cambon had himself declined to attach the slightest importance to these rumours, which he had told me were only newspaper gossip, and had said that it was incredible that M. Millerand should have used such language or should have contemplated such action without prior consultation with the Allies . . . . I said . . . . one thing appeared to be quite certain, and that was that what M. Cambon himself had told us yesterday was incredible, had actually occurred. M. Millerand had acted, and was acting, independently of the Allies, and indeed, without even informing them of his action. . . . This, I went on to say, was an impossible state of affairs. There were only two ways of dealing with the situation ; either the Allies should act as they had hitherto acted, in combination, or they might act separately. The former was the only sound and practical policy. We were anxious to adhere to it and were prepared to do so. But if M. Millerand was unable to attend the meetings of the Conference here, preferred to remain in Paris and regarded himself, in his double capacity of French Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, as if he were the sole Supreme Council now existing, and if he took advantage of that position to speak and act independently in the way he had apparently done, then we might have to abandon the policy of co-operation, and to consider very seriously whether we should not withdraw altogether from the occupied area, and decline to share the responsibility for action concerning which we were not even consulted."[1]

[1]Despatch from Lord Curzon to Lord Derby, April 1st, 1920.

At a subsequent discussion, in the course of which Lord Curzon felt obliged to lay further stress upon the fact that action such as the French Government had taken was really "incompatible with that mutual understanding and that common action upon which the stability of the Alliance and the security of Europe alike depended," M. Cambon declared that during the whole of his long service in England, amounting now to twenty-two years, this was the most painful and serious moment with which he had been faced.

It was hardly to be expected that M. Millerand should be willing to cry *peccavi*. And, since Lord Curzon was equally unwilling to accord an *ex post facto* adhesion to action which he regarded as ill-conceived and fraught with danger, the attitude of the French delegates at San Remo, if unhelpful, was at least intelligible. It had not been rendered more cordial by a proposal suddenly put forward by Mr. Lloyd George, but eventually dropped, that German representatives should immediately be summoned to the Conference table.

San Remo in April was followed by Spa in July. And at Spa representatives of Germany were admitted for the first time to a Conference with the Allies. For this advance Lord Curzon conceded exclusive credit to Mr. Lloyd George. "I believe the French," he declared at a later date, "would have been ready to go on with the old system of declining to meet them and trying to settle the business by correspondence which would have taken a decade. The whole situation changed when we got these people at the table before us, and when they saw themselves treated not only as human beings but as equals."[1] On July the 8th he was able to report that the Allied terms about disarmament had been accepted. "To-morrow," he added in a letter to Lady Curzon, "we resume with Coal, War Criminals, and Reparations—a rather grim list." The list proved to be not only grim, but a source of infinite difficulty. "Trouble has arisen in the last twenty-four hours," he wrote on July the 12th, "with the Germans and also with the French about coal and Reparations; and the Conference which was to have terminated to-day is to be prolonged all the week."

[1] Statement to the Representatives of the United Kingdom, the Dominions and India, June 22nd, 1921.

The trouble was not easily allayed. "All the morning," he told Lady Curzon the next day, "I was busy on Foreign Office work, while the Conference discussed coal. This afternoon we had a meeting and it seems as though the negotiations with the Germans might entirely break down, as they are obdurate about the coal that they can furnish under the Treaty. The situation is very serious, as it is impossible to say what a breakdown will involve." At 10.45 the same night he added as a postscript—

> "We have had a day of great perturbations, and this minute I have come up from Lloyd George's room where I have been dining and where Millerand was hastily summoned, to see if we can come to an arrangement at the last minute with the Germans, otherwise there will be a rupture to-morrow and the Allied forces will have to occupy a portion of Germany called the Ruhr Valley. Sir H. Wilson has been hastily recalled from England and arrived ten minutes ago."

Lord Curzon's relations with soldiers in high positions had not always been happy, as the story of his life and work in India has shown. For Sir Henry Wilson he entertained feelings of real regard. He appreciated to the full his Irish humour and he had a high opinion of his ability. And when, all but two years later, news reached him on a bed of sickness of Henry Wilson's tragic end, his feelings were deeply stirred. "F. has this minute been in to tell me that poor Henry Wilson was assassinated this afternoon in his house in London, presumably by a Sinn Feiner. What an iniquity; what cursed scoundrels. Ireland is, indeed, a heritage of woe, a hell on earth with demons for many of its inhabitants."[1] Towards the end of his life, Sir Henry Wilson became a bitter critic of the Government; but Lord Curzon declared that, however caustic his denunciation, he could never lose the high esteem in which he held him.

At Spa, fortunately, Henry Wilson's services were not after all required. A Coal Agreement was reached and signed; and the question of Reparations was left over for future settlement. This thorny question was further debated at a Conference in London

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon, June 22nd, 1922.

early in the following year, which not only proved abortive, but resulted in an Allied ultimatum to Germany; in the fall of one German Government; in the rise of another and in the eventual acceptance by the latter, with Herr Wirth as Chancellor, of the Allied demands.

These difficulties made frequent consultation between the Allies, and in particular between Great Britain and France, imperative; and in the course of them signs of the temperamental friction which later made the relations between the Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary so difficult, became apparent. From a bed of sickness—due to the recurring trouble in his back—Lord Curzon wrote on April the 22nd, 1921:

> "I am in trouble about the extraordinary tactics of the P.M. over Lympne. He has been trying by every manner of means to prevent me from going, on the ground that it ought to be a Conference between Briand and himself alone. When, however, it transpired that the former insisted upon bringing Berthelot, as there were other Foreign Office questions to be discussed, I sent Vansittart over to enquire whether I should be expected to go as well. He returned no answer, but telephoned this morning to Vansittart, my Private Secretary, without even consulting me, ordering him to go to Lympne to-morrow in my stead."[1]

To Lord Curzon with his natural sensitiveness keyed up, as it invariably was, by physical suffering caused by the nervous affection in his back, such incidents, however trifling, acquired an exaggerated and sinister significance. He complained to his friends that he was subjected to deliberate ignominy; and he brooded darkly on the possibility of resignation.

On this occasion the breach was healed without great difficulty. It was explained that Lord Curzon was under a misapprehension as to what had happened. His Private Secretary had been invited under the impression that he was too unwell to attend himself, and that in these circumstances he would like to be directly represented.

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon.

Regret was expressed that, owing to a misunderstanding, this arrangement had been made without prior consultation with Lord Curzon himself. And a few days later he was writing as if no contretemps had occurred.

> "I have been at the Conference all the morning. I had two and a half hours with all the members, engaged in a protracted struggle with Briand over the form in which our policy is to be announced. At times agreement seemed impossible, but finally he gave way and we (i.e. the British) realised a decisive victory. When we went over to Downing Street Lloyd George was full of praise and congratulations at the result."[1]

The day had been a heavy one, judged even by Lord Curzon's standards. "Yesterday," he mentioned in a letter on May the 3rd, "I calculated my day—14 hours of work! Worse and more than any navvy." And discussion was not yet over. "The Conference sat this morning, 11 a.m. till 1.30, and now, 3 p.m., we are about to meet again. I hope it may finish to-night." Progress was satisfactory, and he had a word of praise for M. Briand. "We all like Briand for his humour and geniality and utter casualness. He and Lloyd George really have a regard for one another."

The cause of all the difficulty had been, as usual, the difference between the points of view of Great Britain and France—the latter straining at the leash, ready and anxious to spring; Great Britain, determined to reduce as far as possible her commitments, steadily holding back. Lord Curzon—or at least the Government in which he was Foreign Minister—was sometimes accused of being pro-German. Such charges shocked him. He was certainly anxious to see Germany given the same chance of recovery as was given to all those who had fought against the Allies; for he realised more clearly than did some people how closely the economic recovery of Europe depended upon the recovery of its constituent parts, and more particularly upon that of so important a constituent as Germany. But he cherished no feelings of undue tenderness towards the German people. Their mentality struck him as being "at once

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon, May 2nd, 1921.

the most formidable and the stupidest in Europe." They made every conceivable blunder in dealing both with France and with Great Britain, so that they appeared to be absolute children in diplomacy. But in treating with them he admitted that he never quite knew whether they were really perfidious or merely perverse, whether they were actually dishonest or merely dull, whether they were friendly or definitely hostile.

Before Germany's acceptance of the ultimatum issued to her in the spring of 1921, he had agreed to proposals put forward by the French representatives at a Conference held in London in March, for imposing upon Germany certain sanctions, notably the occupation of Duisburg and two other towns on the right bank of the Rhine, and the establishment of special Rhineland customs barriers. On the German Government notifying their acceptance of the ultimatum, he took the initiative in urging the cancellation of the sanctions, and represented to the Cabinet that the matter should be brought up at the forthcoming meeting of the Supreme Council and the concurrence of the Allies pressed for. The French Government took a different view. From the beginning they had made it clear that they were determined not to allow the Rhineland sanction to be cancelled until Germany had given "real proof" of her *bona fides* in executing the terms embodied in the ultimatum. On one pretext or another they postponed the meeting of the Supreme Council. And since it was by the Allied Powers in Conference that the sanctions had been imposed, and only by the same authority that they could be cancelled, they necessarily remained in force.

A meeting of the Supreme Council had at last been arranged for August the 4th when a fresh subject of dispute between the Governments of France and Great Britain arose in connection with events in the eastern districts of Germany. The bone of contention here was Upper Silesia, inhabited to a great extent by Germans, but coveted and claimed by Poland. Pending a settlement German troops had been withdrawn, and an Allied Commission had been set up to administer the area, to conduct a plebiscite of the inhabitants and in due course to demarcate the frontier. To the surprise and chagrin of France and Poland, the plebiscite held in March had resulted in a decision in favour of Germany by a majority of more

than six to four. This had proved to be only the beginning of the trouble. The Allied Commission had failed to agree upon a frontier and, while the Commission deliberated and argued, Korfanty, a turbulent character of Polish extraction, acted. At the head of an armed force estimated at close on 100,000 he swooped down upon Upper Silesia, put out of commission the authority of the Powers, and, but for the resistance of the German inhabitants who organised themselves for defence under a German officer of the name of Hoeffer, would undoubtedly have taken over the country. The contingents of French and Italian troops on the spot did little to stay the incursion, and it was not until the British battalions (which had been withdrawn after the taking of the plebiscite) were sent back, that the position began to improve.

The question in dispute in July was whether the situation in Silesia was such as to call for the despatch of further reinforcements. Lord Curzon was satisfied that the troops already on the spot were sufficient to cope with the situation; the French Government were equally certain that they were not, and without waiting for the approval of the Allied Governments, demanded facilities from the German Government for the transmission of another division of French soldiers across German territory, while at the same time rejecting the British proposal that the Supreme Council should at once meet and settle the frontier. This precipitate action was gravely embarrassing to Great Britain. Under the terms of the Peace Treaty the German Government were under an obligation to grant facilities for the passage of Allied troops across German territory, but only if asked for by the Allies in conjunction. And taking advantage of this proviso they had refused the French demand. To the further embarrassment of the Allies, the Note in which their refusal was conveyed to the French Government was made public. It was interpreted by French public opinion as a rebuff of calculated insolence which no German Government would have dared to administer, except in the belief that in the matter at issue the sympathy of Great Britain was with them.

Relations between France and Great Britain had, indeed, never been so strained since the termination of the war, and in the irritation which was aroused across the channel the value of the Alliance

between the two countries was freely questioned. Nor was this attitude due solely to the annoyance of the moment. Great disappointment had been caused by the failure of the Anglo-American Guarantee; a conviction had taken root in the mind of the French people that at each successive Conference between the representatives of the two nations the British point of view had been upheld at the expense of the French; the Russian policy of Great Britain—particularly the conclusion of a Trading Agreement—was regarded with suspicion and dislike. French public opinion was, in fact, resentful, irritated, definitely hostile. Nor were the French Government one whit behind French public opinion in their resentment. The French Ambassador found himself in the painful position of having to convey to Lord Curzon the deliberate opinion of his Government that the attitude of Great Britain, if adhered to, must lead to a definite rupture between the two countries, since persistence in their refusal to associate themselves with the French demand must inevitably be regarded in France as an indication that, in this matter at least, it was their intention to support Germany against her.

The interview was one which each realised was fraught with the possibility of momentous consequences. Lord Curzon listened at first with astonishment and then with hot indignation to the Note which the Ambassador had been charged by his Government to read to him. So shaken was he by the menace which it seemed to him to convey, that he declined, without further opportunity for reflection and consultation with his colleagues, to say anything on the specific issues which it raised. He could not, however, refrain from observing to the Ambassador that it struck him as "deplorable" that such a communication should have been presented to him by the Government of an Ally. Had the French Government, he asked, fully measured the seriousness of the situation which the Note created, and its inevitable consequence upon the Alliance?

As the door closed behind the retreating figure of the Comte de St. Aulaire, it may well have seemed to Lord Curzon that it had at the same time closed ominously on a chapter of European history. With an open rupture between Great Britain and France he saw no hope of escape from the morass from which a stricken world was

struggling painfully to emerge. The ensuing twenty-four hours were a time of anxious consultation. The Cabinet met to hear Lord Curzon's comments on the situation and to consider the lines of his proposed reply. They met again to listen to the reply itself and, at the close, to accord their unanimous endorsement to a statement of the position of Great Britain which was characterised as " masterly." So grave a view did the Government take of the crisis which had suddenly arisen, that it was considered desirable to call the Prime Ministers of the British dominions and the representatives of India, then in London, into consultation. The reply drawn up by Lord Curzon on July the 28th, and communicated to M. Briand by Lord Hardinge on July the 29th, represented, therefore, the views not of the Government of the United Kingdom only, but of the British Empire. It was a closely reasoned statement in language which, while courteous and dignified, lacked nothing in firmness. It concluded with the assertion that the position which had been reached was one that concerned not France and Great Britain alone, but the whole of the Allied and Associated Powers ; and that it was only by that tribunal that the matter in dispute could be resolved.

The crowning disaster of a rupture between the two countries was fortunately avoided and a *modus vivendi* found. A meeting of the Supreme Council took place on August the 8th, at which it was agreed that the question of Silesia should be referred to the Council of the League of Nations and that the Customs barrier on the Rhine should be terminated forthwith, the question of the military sanctions being postponed for future consideration. The corner was thus mercifully turned, though no attempt was made to disguise the gravity of the crisis through which Europe had passed. The meeting of the Supreme Council was described by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons eight days later, as in many respects the most important meeting held since the declaration of peace. " There were questions there," he stated, " which menaced the solidarity of the Alliance." No wonder that Lord Curzon found the burden of public affairs a heavy one. " Oh dear ! it is time I got out of this," he wrote on August the 17th, " and sought a little rest somewhere . . . . I am very tired and stunned and seem never to be out of trouble." [1]

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon.

MEETING OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL AT PARIS, AUGUST 8-13, 1921.

Sir M. Hankey.

M. Camerlynck P. Berthelot M. Loucheur Viscount Ishii.

Lord Curzon D. Lloyd George A. Briand S. Bonomi M. della Torretta G. Harvey Baron Hagashi

This much of history has seemed necessary in order to indicate the nature of the background against which, during these years, Lord Curzon moved as Foreign Secretary. We may now pause for a little to see how he reacted to the environment in which he found himself.

CHAPTER XV

THE PROBLEM OF EGYPT: ACTIONS AND REACTIONS

1919-1922

Considering his upbringing, his early ambitions, his passionate belief in the Imperial destiny of Great Britain, and the dreams which he had long dreamed of the part which he himself might some day play in guiding her on her way to her predestined goal as the dominant Power of the World, it is remarkable how quickly Lord Curzon adapted himself to the altered circumstances of the time. A quarter of a century earlier it had been Lord Salisbury's complaint that his Under Secretary always wanted him to conduct the Foreign Policy of the country as if he had an army of 500,000 men at his beck and call. Now it was Lord Curzon, the erstwhile Under Secretary, who grasped the limitations imposed upon the liberty of the Foreign Secretary by his inability to back diplomacy with force. "The qualities which a British Foreign Minister should now cultivate," he remarked on one occasion, "seem to be those not of cleverness or astuteness, still less of enterprise or daring, but those of endless patience and of an equanimity that never falters."

The British people had—thoughtlessly, perhaps, but none the less effectually—disabled their Foreign Minister from playing a more heroic part by the precipitancy with which they had insisted on demobilisation. "The world knows only too well," he told the members of the Imperial Conference in October, 1923, "that when the war was over we disbanded our forces with almost undue alacrity." In relation to the extent of our Empire we had now an army of almost insignificant dimensions. In these circumstances "the perpetual shouting of challenges and waving of flags" which—in retrospect at any rate—threw so brilliant a halo over the Foreign Policy of Palmerston and Disraeli, were not for us.

Lord Curzon's appreciation of the need for caution and restraint was heightened by the fact that, with undetonated gun-powder still strewn thickly upon the ground, there were Powers upon the Continent which displayed a deplorable tendency to shout challenges and wave flags and which, having maintained their manhood under arms, were in a position to indulge themselves. There was no gainsaying the fact that, since the conclusion of peace, France had become the most formidable military Power in Europe. Under the guidance of a Minister " of great ability and untiring zeal, but of a stiff and rigid nature," she was pursuing a policy which from her own point of view was perfectly intelligible, but which was certainly little calculated to assist towards the tranquillisation of a world in turmoil. And how grievously distraught the world was! As Lord Curzon looked back over the years immediately following the Declaration of Peace, he saw them packed with incidents, crises, alarms and excursions, even with tragedies. " Although it is now nearly five years since the Armistice was signed in a railway carriage in France," he reminded the members of the Imperial Conference in 1923, "the tramp of armed men is still heard upon the Continent, and you have only to pick up your daily paper to hear the rumble of almost chronic revolution in your ears."

Yet despite his frequent disapproval of French aims and methods, he never departed from his conviction that co-operation with France must remain the sheet-anchor of British Foreign Policy.

> " No one is a more profound believer than myself in the policy of the *Entente :* and I do not rest that belief merely on the memories of the war, or on principles of self-interest; my conviction is based on the widest considerations of world peace and world progress. If France and ourselves permanently fall out, I see no prospect of the recovery of Europe or of the pacification of the world. To maintain that unity we have made innumerable sacrifices. During the last two years I have preached no other doctrine and I have pursued no other practice."[1]

[1]Statement to the members of the Imperial Conference, October the 5th, 1923.

While Lord Curzon had always appreciated the value of ships and guns as an adjunct to diplomacy, his conduct of affairs as Foreign Secretary showed that his real greatness as a force in world politics lay in his instinctive recognition of the power of moral rectitude in the field of international relations. The righteousness and justice of the cause, the honesty and single-mindedness with which the cause itself was pursued—these were the things to which he clung with an almost blind tenacity, derived from his primitive but deep-rooted belief in the Divine control of the universe, to which reference has previously been made. It was upon this fundamental trait in his character that rested the acts of moral courage which marked his administration as Viceroy of India, and upon which was built up the lofty idealism which history will recognise as the real source of his greatness throughout the seven years of a brilliant albeit stormy Viceroyalty. And in these dolorous days, when England with her armour laid aside was called upon to play a pacifying part in the affairs of a maimed and sorely harassed world, it was upon these intangible but trustworthy weapons once more that he relied. Our policy, he explained, when reviewing the five years of troubled peace which had rolled by since the signing of the Armistice, had been one not of sensation but of sobriety.

> "It is not one, I think, of which we have any cause to be ashamed. We have endeavoured to exercise a steadying and moderating influence in the politics of the world, and I think and hope that we have conveyed not merely the impression, but the conviction that, whatever other Governments or countries may do, the British Government is never untrue to its word, is never disloyal to its colleagues or its allies, never does anything underhand or mean; and if this conviction be widespread, as I believe it to be, that is the real basis of the moral authority which the British Empire has long exerted and, I believe, will long continue to exert in the affairs of mankind."[1]

The extent to which the temper of his Imperialism had been cooled by the revolutionary change which the war had brought about in

[1]Statement to the members of the Imperial Conference, October the 5th, 1923.

international relations throughout the world, was well illustrated by his attitude towards the Egyptian question which, within a few weeks of the coming of peace, had risen to the surface of a sea of troubles, washed up like many another thorny problem by the convulsion of the waters.

The problem presented by Egypt was, indeed, by no means the least of the many post-war tangles which the British Government were called upon to unravel. During the war the Egyptians had accepted, willingly enough so far as could be seen, the Declaration of a Protectorate which the British Government had issued. The year 1919 was not many weeks old, however, when the authority of Great Britain was rudely challenged by a violent and wholly unexpected outbreak of nationalism centring round the person of one Zaglul Pasha, whose demands were not merely for self-government under British suzerainty, which had satisfied what had been understood to be Egyptian aspirations before the war, but complete internal and external independence. During the first phase of the conflict which had thus arisen, matters had moved with great rapidity. Zaglul had demanded to be heard in London ; his demand had been refused ; the Rushdi cabinet in Cairo had thereupon resigned, and since, in face of the intimidation which Zaglul was able to bring to bear, no other Egyptian was found willing to form a Ministry, Zaglul had been deported, at the instance of Sir Milne Cheetham, who was acting for Sir Reginald Wingate, then on leave, and interned in Malta.

No one imagined that deportation was going to provide a cure for what was quickly realised to be more than a passing ailment ; and on May the 15th, 1919, the appointment of a Mission under the chairmanship of Lord Milner was announced, whose duty it was to be, " to enquire into the causes of the late disorders in Egypt and to report on the existing situation in the country and the form of the Constitution which, under the Protectorate, will be best calculated to promote its peace and prosperity, the progressive development of self-governing institutions, and the protection of foreign interests."

The reception accorded to the Mission in Egypt was anything but encouraging. At the instigation of Zaglul Pasha, who had been

released after a brief period of internment, Lord Milner and his colleagues were subjected to a rigorous boycott. They were not, however, to be deterred from carrying through their investigations ; and in spite of the difficulties under which they worked, they returned to England in the spring of 1920 prepared to lay before Lord Curzon certain provisional conclusions at which they had arrived.

It was, of course, realised that if Great Britain and Egypt were to arrive at a settlement by consent, Zaglul Pasha and those associated with him must be parties to the transaction. In June, therefore, at the invitation of Lord Milner, the Nationalist leader accompanied by Adly Pasha, a prominent and respected figure in Egyptian politics, reached London for discussion of the points at issue ; and by August agreement on the general principles of a settlement had practically been reached. This was to take the form of a Treaty of Alliance between Great Britain and Egypt. It went nine-tenths of the way towards meeting the Nationalists' demands ; but since Zaglul Pasha hesitated to commit himself irrevocably until he had sounded opinion in Egypt itself, no engagement was entered into, but the heads of the proposed terms of agreement were embodied in a Memorandum for that purpose. The terms set forth in this document, which came to be known as the Milner-Zaglul Agreement of August the 18th, 1920, were subsequently embodied in the Report of the Milner Mission as their recommendations to the Government.

It must be admitted that only by a very generous interpretation of language could it be said that these recommendations were covered by the terms of reference under which the scope of the Mission's enquiry had been defined. They went a good deal further than the conclusions provisionally arrived at during their stay in Egypt, which had been communicated to the Government in the previous March. They now included the concession to Egypt of the right of diplomatic representation in foreign countries, and they acquiesced in the conversion of the British army of occupation into a local force, to be quartered in a single specified locality on the confines of the country for the sole purpose of guarding Great Britain's Imperial communications—conditions hardly applicable, surely, in the case of a country under the protection of Great Britain. And there is no doubt that, when communicated by Lord

Curzon to his colleagues, they took the Government completely by surprise. The Foreign Secretary himself took advantage of the presence in England in the autumn of Lord Allenby, then High Commissioner, to discuss the matter with him. " I am engaged on a Note to Cabinet about Egypt," he told Lady Curzon on October the 7th, " concerning which Milner, Allenby and I were in conference for nearly four hours yesterday."

In his Note, Lord Curzon did not attempt to minimise the gravity of the decision which the Cabinet would be asked to take. He emphasised the fact that it would be one of the most momentous that would ever have been taken by a British Government, not only in its effect on Egypt itself, but in its reaction upon every country in the East towards which we acted in a governing, or fiduciary, or mandatory capacity. They would have to bear in mind that in coming to a decision they would not be merely solving a difficulty, but creating a precedent. And he did not hesitate either to call the attention of his colleagues to the dangers which seemed to him to lurk among the proposals, or to suggest safeguards where he thought that they might be provided. But he accepted the broad principles upon which Lord Milner's recommendations rested and he commended them to the favourable consideration of the Cabinet.

> " The remarks which I have made in this paper," he wrote, " must not be held to detract from the thanks which we all owe to Lord Milner and his colleagues for their immense and self-sacrificing labours in the solution of the Egyptian problem. They have rendered a great national and Imperial service. Nor do I dissent either from Lord Milner's main proposition, that the solution is to be found in a Treaty of Alliance between Great Britain and the Egyptian Government, or from the major premiss on which the principle is founded, namely, that if we are to advance it must be a large advance in the direction not merely of co-operation but of trust." [1]

The Government took the line that they were in no way bound by the recommendations of Lord Milner's Mission. But they realised that these must provide the basis of future discussion; and in

[1] Memorandum dated October the 11th, 1920.

February, 1921, they laid the Report before Parliament, and published an invitation which they had sent to the Sultan to despatch a duly accredited delegation to England to negotiate a settlement. In face of the recommendations made in the Report, they went so far as to concede that the status of Protectorate was not a satisfactory relation in which Egypt should continue to stand to Great Britain.

The Sultan accepted the invitation which had been tendered to him, and during July and August Lord Curzon was engaged on negotiations with the delegation under the leadership of Adly Pasha, who had become Prime Minister. As the negotiations proceeded the difficulties in the way of agreement grew. Before the arrival of the delegation the question of the future relations between Great Britain and Egypt had come before the Imperial Conference, where stress had been laid upon the supreme importance of maintaining intact the position of the country *vis-à-vis* the Suez Canal. Nor were the Cabinet, as a whole, prepared to go as far as Lord Curzon would have done to reach agreement. "We had a very long Cabinet," he wrote on October the 21st, 1921, "and I had to explain my Egyptian negotiations, which are likely to lead to nothing. The Cabinet all much stiffer than I am in the matter, and I am sure we shall have an absolute rupture with another Ireland in Egypt."[1] Lord Curzon was, in fact, in a minority in the Cabinet. In the terms which it was agreed to offer Adly Pasha, the majority had already gone further than they would have been prepared to do, but for the publication of the Milner Report. Lord Curzon would have gone further still, and placed before his colleagues a detailed statement of the further advances which he advised should be made. Discussion showed, however, that the majority having already conceded more than they approved, were not to be persuaded. The negotiations consequently broke down because, as Lord Curzon explained to the Imperial Conference two years afterwards, "Adly Pasha dared not concede anything from fear of the extremist or Zaglul party in Egypt, whereas my instructions rendered it impossible for me to meet him on many of the points on which he was disposed to insist."

It was not long before Lord Curzon had the melancholy satisfaction of seeing the pessimistic forecast contained in his letter to

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon.

Lady Curzon fulfilled. For on his return to Egypt at the end of November, Adly Pasha resigned; the extremists roused popular feeling to such a pitch that no one was found willing to form a Ministry; and in the case of Zaglul and his chief associates, whose incendiary speeches were responsible for rioting and bloodshed, it was found necessary to resort for a second time to deportation. With no Government in office the administration of the country was carried on precariously under Martial Law with the assistance of the British Under Secretaries in the various Departments.

It was obvious to everyone that such a state of affairs could not be permitted to continue indefinitely. And in January, 1922, the High Commissioner, who had viewed with grave concern the rupture in November, and who had since been striving by private negotiation to set on foot an Egyptian Government in succession to the Adly Ministry, telegraphed conditions on which an ex-Minister, Sarwat Pasha, would be prepared to take office. The crucial condition was the abolition of the Protectorate as a preliminary to, and not as a provision of, a Treaty to be concluded between Great Britain and Egypt. Lord Allenby was convinced that on no other condition was a settlement possible, and he asked that he might be authorised by telegram to negotiate on these lines. What advice was Lord Curzon to give the Cabinet in face of this situation? He found himself in no little difficulty, for his recommendation to the Cabinet in November, as to the form which the Treaty to be offered to Adly Pasha should take, had been rejected. His colleagues, as he did not fail to remind them, had preferred to take a course which had been attended with the very consequences which he had then predicted. On the whole he thought the risk involved in acceptance of the proposals of the High Commissioner was less than the danger of refusing to be guided by his advice, though he urged that much more specific undertakings should be demanded of the Egyptian Ministers in regard to the matters to which Great Britain attached vital importance, than Lord Allenby himself appeared to be willing to accept.

Herein lay the difference between the High Commissioner and the Cabinet. Lord Allenby had always held that since Lord Milner had been regarded in Egypt as being invested with plenipotentiary

powers, it was not open to the Government to recede from the terms contained in the Milner-Zaglul Agreement and embodied subsequently in the Milner Report. And since, in these circumstances, he was unwilling to communicate to the Egyptians proposals which seemed to him to amount to a repudiation of promises already made, he now tendered his resignation. A deadlock had thus been reached which called for immediate action.

Lord Allenby was summoned to London; and it was only after prolonged consultation between him and his advisers on the one side and Lord Curzon and the Prime Minister on the other, that a solution was at last discovered. In a Manifesto addressed to the Egyptian people, the British Government declared the Protectorate at an end and Egypt to be an independent Sovereign State. But they also declared in the same document that, pending the conclusion of Agreements concerning them, the security of the communications of the British Empire in Egypt; the defence of Egypt against all foreign aggression or interference, direct or indirect; the protection of foreign interests in Egypt and the protection of minorities; and the status of the Sudan, were "absolutely reserved to the discretion of His Majesty's Government." And, to make assurance doubly sure, they added at the conclusion of their Manifesto that until Agreements had been arrived at, the *status quo* in all these matters would remain intact.

Sarwat Pasha was satisfied by the unconditional recognition of Egypt as an independent Sovereign State; the High Commissioner was satisfied by the contents of the Declaration which carried out the undertakings by which he held the Government to be bound, and the Cabinet by its form, which secured to them in the matter of the vital interests of Great Britain in Egypt the juridical position which they had been unwilling to forego. On March the 14th, 1922, Parliament declared itself satisfied by approving by 202 votes to 77 the policy of the Government; and on March the 15th, the Sultan assumed the title of His Majesty King Fuad and proclaimed Egypt a Monarchy.

Careful study of the long-drawn negotiations which ended in the abolition of the Protectorate over Egypt throws an interesting light upon Lord Curzon as Foreign Secretary. It shows that his power

of lucid exposition was undiminished; that he marshalled facts, figures and arguments in orderly procession with all his former skill; that he was quick to grasp the essentials of any problem with which he was confronted and that his judgment of situations—if not always of persons—was, therefore, ordinarily sound. But it shows also that for all his confidence in his own judgment, he displayed a surprising diffidence in pressing his views against opposition in the Cabinet. The Egyptian question was essentially a Foreign Office question on which it was to be expected that the Foreign Secretary should give the Cabinet a definite lead. Lord Curzon was convinced that unless the concessions which he advocated were sanctioned by the Government, no settlement would be reached and Great Britain would be saddled with another Ireland in Africa. He had behind him the weight of authority provided by the unanimous Report of the Milner Commission; and he was supported by the High Commissioner and his advisers on the spot. Yet he accepted instructions from his colleagues which tied his hands and brought about the rupture which he predicted. To those who recalled the vigour with which as Viceroy of India he had invariably pressed his views upon the Government in London; his intolerance of opposition and his uncompromising rejection of anything that fell short of what he himself deemed necessary, this new-found pliancy was a perplexing development in Lord Curzon's character. It became a factor of increasing importance in his administration of the Foreign Office having repercussions in many directions, and it will necessarily become a subject of increasing comment as the story of his tenure of the Foreign Office is unfolded.

In the meantime a clue to this unexpected malleability may be found in the subtle change which his attitude towards men and matters had for some time past been undergoing—a change which it is now easy to perceive had its roots as far back as the year 1905 and had been creeping over him from that time onwards, not at any uniform pace, sometimes advancing, sometimes receding, but making headway none the less and now plainly apparent to all who knew him well. No one, who after a lapse of years was suddenly brought into contact with him at this time, and who carried in his mind the picture drawn from earlier association with him of a man

of exuberant animal spirits, stimulating, forceful, confident in himself and inspiring confidence in others, the dominant personality in any gathering of his fellow men, could fail to miss in the make-up of the Foreign Minister the assurance and the hilarious optimism of those earlier days. There is no need to remind the reader of these volumes that Lord Curzon had always been subject to periods of depression. But these had been of the nature of parentheses which had emphasised by contrast the high tension of the key-note on which his life symphony was habitually played. There were still flashes of the old vitality ; at the telling of some tale of humour the eyes would still light up with the roguish twinkle of former days, the broad shoulders shake with spasms of what Mr. Harold Nicolson has well described as rich, eighteenth century amusement. Neither were indications lacking that the old readiness of wit was still there. A printer's error in a Consular report on the condition of the people in a district of the Near East was capable of bringing it into play.

> " The condition of the inhabitants of these districts is deplorable," he read. " Education is practically non-existent, and religious observances have all but disappeared. So much is this the case that I am credibly informed that even the monks of Mount Athos are violating their . . . ."

here an unfortunate printer's error occurred, for the *v* of vows had been supplanted by a *c*. Lord Curzon's swiftly moving eye came suddenly to rest, and then—" Better send them a Papal Bull," he noted in the margin. But these had now become but episodes in a solemn fugue written and played in a minor key. And from this plane of lowered vitality he slipped all too easily into sombre moods of melancholy. Discovery one day in a drawer at Kedleston of the faded reports on his work and conduct at his private school was sufficient to set in motion a gloomy train of thought. High praise had been bestowed upon him and a great future had been predicted for him. Had these early forecasts proved correct? He sometimes wondered, he wrote after perusal of them, whether he was not going down hill in reputation :

> "I never seem to get any credit for anything nowadays. No one accuses me of any definite errors or blunders of statesmanship. But there seems to be a general tendency to run me down, or completely to ignore what I am doing or have done. If one looks at the record of this in any book of reference it is very substantial, as varied, and in a way as successful, as that of any Englishman of my age living. And yet it does not seem to count for much, and I am treated as though I were rather a back number."

And, as one watches him musing sadly upon these things, he stands out suddenly before one a poignantly pathetic figure. "Well, perhaps I am," he murmurs. "I suppose one gets what one deserves and I daresay the fault lies somewhere in me. And yet, how I have worked and toiled and never spared myself, while I see others treating work as a jest and life as a holiday."[1]

So great a change in his general outlook necessarily affected his attitude towards his work. His absorption was as great as ever; but the daily task had become more of a labour and less of an interest than it had formerly been. There were days when it was with almost Sisyphian hopelessness that he contemplated the never ending stream of tabbed and docketed boxes that flowed in upon him from the Foreign Office. "I suppose I must now tackle the great pile of boxes stacked at my left hand," he wrote one day in October, 1921. "How I hate the sight of them."[2] Subjects from outside his own Department were no longer welcomed as adding variety to his daily fare; and the necessity imposed upon him by his position as Leader of the House of Lords, of familiarising himself with a number of extraneous questions, became increasingly irksome. "I have to take the House of Lords debate on Irish reprisals to-morrow," he complained in a letter to Lady Curzon on October the 19th, 1920. "What I am to say, I have no idea, since I have not attended a single one of the Committees on Ireland." And on another occasion: "Lloyd George has gone and fixed a Cabinet meeting at Inverness next Wednesday morning to discuss de Valera's reply, which seems

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon dated September the 10th, 1921.
[2] Letter to Lady Curzon.

to be very insolent. I have been looking out the trains from here (Kedleston), and I really cannot go. It would mean two whole days and two whole nights in the train and this would simply knock me to pieces."[1] Indeed, his letters during these years tell a story the meaning of which it is impossible to misunderstand—"Back to all the worries," he wrote on November the 1st, 1920. "It is just past lunch; A.J.B. is coming in to discuss Egypt in ten minutes. Then I have to go down to F.O. to see Imperiali. Then Cabinet with a Persian crisis; a French ditto; the Egyptian question. I have to master all the papers on all these points. Then a Committee on November 11th ceremony. Then a solitary dinner. Then to compose a speech on Ireland. It is breaking me."[2]

Yet he could not bring himself seriously to contemplate the possibility of giving up. Now and then he would appear to listen to the promptings of his overtaxed system. "I absolutely hate being back here," he wrote on his return to London from France, in February, 1921. "Everything has dropped back into the old rut. . . . What a happy man I should be if I could escape it all."[3] And on May the 29th of the same year he wrote in a similar strain to Sir George Cunningham, who had recently retired after serving him upwards of four years as his private secretary—"I envy you the peace and freedom of retirement and I suspect that you are much happier at a distance from Whitehall. So should I be, and I suppose that in due course I shall attain it." But he knew quite well that the spell under which he lay was one that he could not and would not break, however attractive the prospect which awaited him were he to do so. Often he talked of resignation; but always when he reached the brink of the precipice and looked over he turned back. Once at a critical moment in his career he had resigned, and the incident, with its aftermath, had shaken him to the foundations of his being and had left an ineffaceable mark upon him. Always in the background of his mind when he toyed with the idea of resignation, there loomed the spectre of that earlier disaster. Sometimes he spoke of it; more often he brooded upon it in silence. But always it was there. It became a sombre background against which he viewed

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon, dated September the 3rd, 1921.
[2] Letter to Lady Curzon, *Ibid.*

each fresh political difficulty as it arose. When attacked in January, 1918, for his action in connection with the passing of the Woman Suffrage Clause in the House of Lords, he wished to continue the controversy in the columns of the press. He was dissuaded from doing so by Sir George Cunningham, though he insisted that always when he had refrained from publicly defending himself against charges of the kind now brought against him he had subsequently regretted it. He could have thrown a flood of light upon the controversy which had led to his resignation of the Indian Viceroyalty, he declared, but had been persuaded not to pursue the matter, with the result that his whole subsequent career had been gravely prejudiced. Sir George Cunningham pointed out that he must look to history for his vindication, to which Lord Curzon assented.

It was not only memories of the past that militated against his voluntary withdrawal from the Government. He was morbidly sensitive to the effect which his resignation might have upon the estimation in which the public held him. The respect and recognition of his countrymen—these were the things which above all else he craved. To retain them he was willing to brave the pangs of bodily suffering which the strain of office entailed and to endure that which for him was harder still to bear—personal humiliation. During these years a strange form of dual control—of which indications have been given already and of which more will have to be said hereafter—came to be exercised over the Foreign Policy of the country. And control shared by two men, both emotional and highly strung but differing profoundly not in method only but in outlook, was bound to lead to violent collision. On these occasions the Foreign Secretary suffered grievously. Often he protested verbally, sometimes in writing, against what he regarded as the ill-judged excursions of the Prime Minister, made sometimes without the knowledge of the Foreign Office, into the domain of Foreign Policy ; but always he refrained from pressing his protests to their logical conclusion. On one notable occasion, to which reference will be made hereafter, he had the assurance of more than one of the more prominent of his colleagues in the Cabinet that they were prepared to associate themselves with him in his protest, to accompany him to the Prime Minister and, failing an outcome of the interview which

they could regard as satisfactory, to join him in tendering their resignations. Lord Curzon pondered long upon the matter and decided that he would first elaborate his complaint on paper and submit it in a letter to the Prime Minister. The letter was drafted; but it was never sent, because, as Lord Curzon afterwards noted upon the envelope which contained it, before he had found time to submit it for the consideration of all those with whom he was acting, "the crash came and Lloyd George fell."

It would, however, be flagrantly unjust to attribute Lord Curzon's attitude to a mere selfish desire to cling to office. Human action is seldom the outcome of a simple motive. It is determined by a complex combination of causes, and conscious reasoning is often profoundly influenced by subconscious promptings. And while to the actor himself the process of reasoning is necessarily plain, the subconscious working of his mind is usually hidden. Lord Curzon was convinced that it was in the best interests of the country that he should remain at his post, even when his doing so entailed personal suffering and, indeed, ignominy. "Perhaps I was wrong to stay," he wrote down afterwards as a result of one of those periods of introspection in which he was wont to indulge. "And there were moments," he added, "when the situation was painful and even humiliating." But he was persuaded to do so by "the certain knowledge that if I were to go, my place would be taken by the —— combination, which I regarded as a great national peril."[1]

This state of affairs preyed grievously on Lord Curzon's mind; and, burdened with work which taxed his strength to the utmost, he lost much of his old resiliency. Conscious of the loss, he developed a distaste for the companionship from which, in the past, he had been accustomed to draw so keen a zest for life. More and more as the days went by he withdrew from the society of his friends. "I have no news," he wrote on March the 10th, 1920, "for I see nobody."[2] Yet when his friends respected his apparent desire for solitude, he complained bitterly of neglect.

> "I think I must be entirely forgotten, or have no friends left," he wrote from a bed of sickness one day in the summer of

[1] Pencil notes by Lord Curzon.
[2] Letter to Lady Curzon.

1922. "Not a single one of the people whom I used to entertain year after year at Hackwood has written one line, or even left a card. Well, such is the world. It does not wait even till you are dead to forget you; but if you are laid temporarily on the shelf it shuts and locks the door of the cupboard so as not to be reminded."[1]

It does not seem to have occurred to him that it was his own withdrawal from the society of his old friends and acquaintances that was responsible for his increasing loneliness; and, when remonstrated with, he protested innocence. "I am quite unaware of any drift apart," he wrote in reply to a letter from Lord Lamington, "still less of any cause for it. My overwhelming work which leaves me no leisure explains why I rarely see anybody, even my old friends; and why my life, in Dickens' phrase, is only 'one dem'd long horrid grind.'"

This frame of mind tended to foster a trait in his character which it had always required a conscious effort on his part to check. A recent historian has said of the Emperor William II of Germany that he was driven to "an ostentatious display of his authority by the wish . . . . to betray no sign of physical weakness."[2] Something of the same sort might with truth be said of Lord Curzon. Like the German Emperor he suffered from early youth from a grievous physical disability. With heroic will and with amazing success he forced himself to rise superior to it. In face of what he had himself constantly to battle with and overcome in the discharge of his daily duties, the petty inconveniences to which he put those who served under him were brushed aside as things too trivial to require consideration. Recognition of what was due to his subordinates floated idly on the surface of his mind and sometimes attracted his passing notice, as we have seen from his casual admission to Mr. Clement Jones.[3] But it was an affectation rather than a conviction, for except when his attention was called specifically to it by outside agency, he acted in complete oblivion of it. From the highest official to the humblest messenger there was scarcely a man in the Foreign

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon, dated May the 22nd, 1922.
[2] "Kaiser Wilhelm II," by Emil Ludwig, English Translation, page 64.
[3] See back, page 206.

Office staff who at some time or another during Lord Curzon's tenure of the post of Foreign Minister did not nurse a grievance against his Chief for some unconscious act lacking in consideration. Yet he had only to be told that he was giving cause for umbrage, to make amends.

> "Many thanks for your kind remembrance, which has pleased me greatly," he wrote to Sir George Cunningham, who had sent him his good wishes on his birthday. "Lady Curzon being away and the whole of the family absent, I have just returned—8 p.m.—from being photographed, church-warden pipe in hand, with the Foreign Office Messengers' staff at a hostelry called the Cheshire Cheese, in the Strand, where, being unable to celebrate my own birthday, I invited them to celebrate it for me."

It was the story of his Balliol servant and the broken teapot over again—the inconsiderate treatment of the former followed years later by an impulsive and delightful *amende honorable*.

CHAPTER XVI

THE TREATY OF SÈVRES

1918-1921

THE unusual degree of control which Mr. Lloyd George exercised over Foreign Policy after the cessation of hostilities was to a great extent the outcome of abnormal circumstances consequent on the war itself. As Prime Minister he was necessarily the supreme representative of his country at the Peace Conference, and the Peace Conference was the inevitable starting point of British post-war Foreign Policy. The negotiations were, therefore, conducted on behalf of Great Britain by Mr. Lloyd George; and it was always possible for him after his return from France to claim the right to deal with this or that question, on the ground that he had been responsible for the policy pursued at Paris.

That this was natural and, indeed, to some extent inevitable Lord Curzon readily admitted. But while admitting that, in the special circumstances of the time, it was reasonable that the Prime Minister should take the lead, he was very far from agreeing that he should do so almost to the exclusion of the Foreign Minister. And from the first he had viewed with alarm a tendency which he thought that he detected in Mr. Lloyd George to take advantage of the situation by assuming the position almost of a Dictator. Often as the War Cabinet met in these days it was not in such constant session as Lord Curzon thought that it ought to be.

"I am somewhat disturbed," he wrote as early as October, 1918, "at the failure to summon the War Cabinet, and have an

> uneasy consciousness that things are being or may be done, for which we shall bear the responsibility but of which we are not aware. In my view the Cabinet ought to be sitting every day in these times. Repeated meetings have been promised and even arranged to discuss German Colonies, Terms of Armistice and other vital considerations. But they are always postponed frequently at the last moment. Important questions are shelved, and even as regards information we are left to pick up what we can from the boxes and telegrams."[1]

And he formed the opinion that, if the control of Foreign Policy was not to pass altogether out of the hands of the Foreign Minister the tendency was one which would have to be strenuously resisted.

It was with particular interest, consequently, and not always without alarm, that he looked on during the year 1919 from the Foreign Office in London, at the proceedings of the British Delegation in Paris. And viewing events from day to day with the detachment of an interested spectator, he placed his own interpretation upon them; and in particular he read into the suppression of the Council of Ten and the rise and rapid apotheosis of "the Big Four," a special and sinister significance. Everything seemed to him to point to the supersession of the Foreign Office and the unchallenged domination of Mr. Lloyd George. And, when later in the year he succeeded to the substantive appointment himself, he did so imbued with the belief that what he regarded as the rightful position of the Foreign Office had already been forfeited by default.

Harmonious collaboration between the Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary might have been possible, and, indeed, in the circumstances of the time, highly advantageous, had those posts been held by men of less antithetical natures than Lord Curzon and Mr. Lloyd George. The difficulties which arose between them were due not merely to differences of opinion on the merits of the questions which came before them for decision—though in some cases these were considerable—but even more to differences of method. They were sundered by much the same gulf that had yawned between Lord Curzon as Viceroy of India and Lord Kitchener as Commander-

[1] Letter to Mr., afterwards Sir, Austen Chamberlain, October the 23rd, 1918.

in-Chief. Like Lord Kitchener, Mr. Lloyd George had a supreme contempt for convention in administration. His methods had much of the directness which had characterised Lord Kitchener's. In the large Private Secretariat which he built up for himself in Downing Street, he found a convenient and ever ready agency for carrying into effect any orders which he felt moved to give. In the pressure of the times the necessity for consulting or even informing the Foreign Office was sometimes overlooked. Interviews would be granted to the representatives of foreign Governments without the knowledge of the Foreign Minister; and in these circumstances it is not surprising that occasions arose on which it seemed to other Powers that the British Government spoke with two discordant voices. More particularly was this so, of course, in the case of those questions upon which there existed a definite divergence of view between the Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary. And on no question did they differ more profoundly, or with more disastrous consequences, than on the attitude to be adopted by Great Britain towards Greece and Turkey.

From the first Lord Curzon had urged the importance of dealing promptly with Turkey and of effecting a settlement of the whole Near Eastern question—with how little success a reference to what has already been said in chapter XII will show. There is little doubt that if the Powers had found it possible to deal with Turkey during the opening months of 1919, they would have found her in no position to reject any reasonable terms that they might have decided to offer her. But they did not find it possible. Innumerable questions were clamouring for settlement and Mr. Lloyd George, with little previous knowledge of Foreign Policy, found himself suddenly called upon to play a leading part in arranging the affairs of half the nations of Europe. It is difficult to know which to admire most, the courage or the assurance with which he set about devising new and often purely arbitrary frontiers for the protesting peoples of Central Europe, and unravelling the tangles of Silesia, Fiume, Poland and other foci of continental trouble. It was his misfortune rather than his fault that, at a time when prompt action was above all things called for, he should have been drawn by President Wilson, together with the representatives of the other Powers assembled in Paris for

the Peace Conference, into the morass of the League of Nations discussion. Lord Curzon looked on at the proceedings of the Peace Conference with feelings of growing apprehension, and in May he put his fears on paper in a letter to Mr. Chamberlain—" The methods of the Peace Conference have, I think, been mistaken throughout ; and it has been tragic to read of decisions arrived at in independence of any expert authority and containing the seeds of certain failure."

Lord Curzon had certainly given his colleagues no excuse for pleading ignorance of his view either as to the urgency of the Near Eastern question, or as to the nature of the settlement to be aimed at. The ejection of the Turk from Europe and the establishment of a much reduced but compact and homogeneous Turkish State in Asia Minor were to his mind the essentials of any permanent settlement of this age-long question. Such a policy entailed the amputation of large tracts even of the Asiatic dominions of the former Turkish Empire. Syria and Palestine, Arabia, Mesopotamia and Armenia—all these extensive lands hitherto incorporated in the loosely knit Sovereignty of the Sultan must be freed finally from the capricious and too often savage tyranny of Turkish domination. On the other hand the future Turkish State, with its seat of Government at Brusa, Angora or Konia, must be permitted to occupy in its integrity the historic tongue of land thrust out from Asia in the direction of Europe and known comprehensively as Asia Minor. No European encroachment upon the natural geographical boundaries of this territory, whether Italian, French or Greek, must be allowed. In a Minute drawn up some time before the termination of the war, he had set forth the arguments for such a policy. He dealt first with the case for confining the future Turkish State to Asia.

> " For nearly five centuries the presence of the Turk in Europe has been a source of distraction, intrigue and corruption in European politics, of oppression and misrule to the subject nationalities, and an incentive to undue and overweening ambitions in the Moslem World. It has encouraged the Turk to regard himself as a Great Power, and has enabled him to impose upon others the same illusion. It has placed him in a position to play off one Power against another, and in their

jealousies and his own machinations to find pretexts for his continued immunity. It has been an unexpugnable barrier to the solution of the Balkan problem or the full emancipation of the Balkan peoples. It has been an equal obstacle to the proper or good government of his own people whose resources have been squandered in the polluted *coulisses* of Constantinople, or in the expenditure required for the upkeep of military and naval forces disproportionate to the real strength or requirements of the Turkish nation."

Next, he discussed the question of the successors to the Turks in their erstwhile capital. Powerful arguments were shown to exist against the installation of any one Power in the seats of the mighty on the shores of the Golden Horn. Great Britain because of her traditional policy and her great Eastern connections would be in some respects the most suitable heir to the Turk, and the choice would probably be more acceptable than any other to the Eastern World. But the main duties and responsibilities of Great Britain lay elsewhere. She would emerge from the war with an increase of obligations which she would with difficulty sustain, and no British Government would dream of adding to them by the assumption of so vast and perilous a charge. Some other solution must therefore be sought:

"The successive elimination of the various possible or available Powers brings us to the discussion of the final alternative of some form of international authority; and many and obvious as are the objections to a condominium, it may yet be found that, short of keeping the Turk in his capital, this is the only possible alternative."

Under such a scheme, an International Commission presided over possibly by an American, or as a conceivable alternative, America herself as the Mandatory of a League of Nations, would occupy and administer Constantinople and the shores, both European and Asiatic, of the Bosphorus. With a Turkish capital established securely in the highlands of Anatolia many of the Turks who "already consti-

tuted only forty per cent. of the population of Constantinople" might be expected to seek new homes across the Straits; the remainder would continue to reside in "what would have become *par excellence* the Cosmopolis or international city of the Eastern World."

Into the concluding passage of his Minute crept that note of romance which gave so peculiar a distinction to his treatment of all questions associated with ancient or mediæval history. Not the least of the advantages of such a settlement in the eyes of some would be the fact that in these circumstances, "Justinian's great Byzantine fane of St. Sophia, which was for nine hundred years a Christian church, and has only been for little more than half that period a Muhammadan mosque, would naturally revert to its original dedication. On the other hand the integrity and sanctity of the great Islamic mosques of Constantinople, more than sufficient for the Moslem population, would be scrupulously respected and guaranteed."[1]

Such was the solution "at once drastic and decisive" which commended itself to Lord Curzon and which he believed could be effected by prompt and resolute handling. And from the day that he took up his duties as Mr. Balfour's deputy at the Foreign Office, he urged it upon the Government. Delay in dealing with the question exasperated him. "I wish to express to my colleagues," he wrote on March the 25th, 1919, "certain apprehensions which I cannot help entertaining about the progress of events in the Near and Middle East." The terms of the Armistice granted to Turkey had been neither so comprehensive nor so severe as Lord Curzon himself had advised. And three months' neglect at the hands of the Peace Conference had already resulted in a serious deterioration in the situation. In Constantinople the Committee of Union and Progress far from being dissolved was everywhere active in the background. Enver Pasha was still acclaimed as a national hero. The forts of the Dardanelles remained intact, occupied only by weak Allied detachments. On all sides evidence of the ability of the Allied Powers to enforce their will was steadily dissolving. The French and Greeks had been ejected from the Ukraine. We ourselves

[1] Minute dated January the 2nd, 1918, and circulated to the Cabinet in January, 1919.

were withdrawing from Transcaspia ; it was widely known that we intended to evacuate the Caucasus ; ere long our flag would cease to fly upon the Caspian. Egypt was in widespread and serious revolt, and the Turkish flag had actually been raised again in the Valley of the Nile. The fate of Palestine remained undecided ; in Syria France and Great Britain were sharply divided. Such was the picture upon which " the Old Turk who still hopes to re-establish the former regime, and the Young Turk who means to cheat us, if he can, of the spoils of victory, look out from the crumbling watchtowers of Stambul." [1]

But the warning fell upon deaf ears ; and three weeks later Lord Curzon again drew attention to the steady deterioration which delay was producing in the situation. The Turks had recovered from the first dismay of defeat and were intriguing with all their old spirit and skill. The decision as to Constantinople had already been so long delayed that what might have have been in January would probably be found more than difficult in May or June. No decision had been come to as to the future of Armenia. More lamentable still, failure to compose Anglo-French differences over Syria had led to the expedient of a Commission, which so far from being confined to the Syrian question had, "with perfect logic but with deplorable imprudence," been instructed to examine and report upon the entire Middle Eastern situation. A sinister development due to constant delay was that, in the absence of definite decisions by the Powers in Conference, individual nations were showing signs of acting independently. Italy had already anticipated and, indeed, precipitated the ultimate decision by a military descent upon Adalia and the neighbouring coasts and by sending troops to Konia. She had also " with a rashness to which it is difficult to find a parallel " accepted a Mandate for the Caucasus and the Caspian. And, besides this accomplished fact, it was rumoured that a claim put forward by Greece to Smyrna and the vilayet of Aidin was likely to be conceded by the Peace Conference, not on account of any urgent political or military necessity, but thanks to " the superior diplomatic ability of M. Venizelos." Was it to be believed, asked Lord Curzon, that the Greeks " who cannot keep order five miles outside the gates of

[1] Note dated March the 25th, 1919.

Salonika," would be allowed contentedly to occupy and administer a great city like Smyrna or a province like Aidin?

These excursions by individual Powers into the thorny mazes of the Near Eastern problem filled him with alarm for the future.

> "That the Turks should be deprived of Constantinople is, in my opinion, inevitable and desirable as the crowning evidence of their defeat in the war; and I believe that it will be accepted with whatever wrathful reluctance by the Eastern World. But when it is realised that the fugitives are to be kicked from pillar to post and that there is to be practically no Turkish Empire and probably no Caliphate at all, I believe that we shall be giving a most dangerous and most unnecessary stimulus to Moslem passions throughout the Eastern World and that sullen resentment may easily burst into savage frenzy."

He urged, therefore, that if it was not too late, the partitioning or Mandatory policy should not be pursued in Asia Minor beyond the geographical limits which were the inevitable consequences of the war, and that presuming the Italians had already accepted the Mandate for the Caucasus—"though I am not aware of any existing authority for offering it to them"—they should be asked even at the last moment "to desist from an act of such deplorable levity, for which no justification can be found on any plea of local self-determination, of public or private interest, or morality or even of expediency."[1]

No protest had the smallest effect in staying the steady march of events in the direction which Lord Curzon most earnestly deprecated. The encroachments of Italy and Greece on the Asiatic territories of the Turks went rapidly forward. Between May the 15th and 22nd, 1919, 15,000 Greek troops were disembarked at Smyrna and a number of places in the coastal district were occupied in accordance with an authorisation issued by the Peace Conference in Paris. And, in June, Lord Curzon took up his pen once more in a vain hope of arousing those primarily concerned to a sense of the disastrous future towards which matters were plainly drifting.

[1]Note dated April the 18th, 1919, and circulated to the Cabinet on April 22nd.

Since at a later date an attempt was made to hold Lord Curzon responsible for the very disasters against which he constantly warned the Government, it is due to him that his Despatch of June the 20th, 1919, should be published *in extenso*.

Earl Curzon to Mr. Balfour

Foreign Office, June 20, 1919.

" Sir,

On grounds of public policy I have been a good deal disturbed at the continuous and as yet unarrested advance of the Italian and Greek forces in the Western parts of the Turkish dominions in Asia Minor, and I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement from such information as is available in the Foreign Office of the extent to which that advance has so far in each of the two cases been pursued. Though these movements were in part undertaken in the first instance with the knowledge, and in the case of the Greeks with the sanction, of the Allied Powers at Paris, they appear to be continued in their later stages, so far as is known here, with no similar authority, and in open disregard of the principle, laid down in the early days of the Paris Conference, that its ultimate decisions should not be prejudiced by premature and aggressive action in respect of the occupation of territory by any of the interested States or Powers. Moreover, in the case of the Greeks in particular, they are alleged to have been accompanied by scenes of discreditable and unprovoked outrage.

I am the more concerned at the occurrence of this twofold penetration because it is apparently being prosecuted without interference or protest (save from the Turks) at a time when the importance of retaining at least some portion of the Turkish Sovereignty and of the former Turkish dominions in Asia is reported to have received a somewhat tardy recognition at the hands of the Allied Powers, although it must be clear that the realisation of any such policy will be seriously compromised by the presence in the regions affected of the forces of two States whose ulterior intentions so small an attempt is made to conceal. A further disquieting symptom is the constant recur-

rence of warnings from our representatives at Constantinople of the consequences that must ensue from these continued encroachments upon what remains of Turkish Sovereignty in Asia, and the likelihood that this part of the Middle East will thereby be plunged into a state of renewed and, in all probability, protracted violence and disorder. The further these advances, whether of Greeks or of Italians, are pushed, the greater becomes the difficulty of withdrawal, and the more inevitable the prospect of future strife, if not of serious bloodshed.

In the various appreciations that reach the Foreign Office of the policy that is now being pursued with regard to Turkey, I cannot find any voice that welcomes or indeed defends these encroachments. And yet the persistence of the actors appears successfully to effect what the considered judgment of the spectators declines to approve.

I have ventured to submit this representation, not as a protest, which I cannot but feel will be useless, but with a view to ascertaining whether it is in contemplation to place any limit to the extension of these advances, and whether there is any ground for regarding them as provisional in character and duration. I shall be very grateful for any information that you may be able to give me on these points.

I have, etc.

Curzon of Kedleston."

Still the Powers delayed. They clung to the hope that America might consent to play a predominant part in straightening out the tangle into which matters in the Near East had fallen. They were not without grounds for their belief, for President Wilson had gone so far as to ask that action might be postponed ; and for a time there was a definite expectation that America would not only emerge from her traditional isolation but was contemplating doing so on a large and dramatic scale. This hope was doomed to disappointment ; but before it vanished, further developments of a menacing nature had taken place.

In an evil moment the Sultan acting with the best intentions, had

sent out to Angora in Asia Minor, in a position of some importance, a young man of between thirty and forty years. Mustapha Kemal Pasha, a man of forceful personality, quickly gathered round him all the elements of discontent, including various members of the Committee of Union and Progress who had contrived to escape from the prisons of Stambul, and raised the standard of revolt against the Government in Constantinople. He provided a focus for the anti-Christian and anti-European elements which were rapidly rallying in face of the apparent impotence of the Allied Powers. And, if anything had been needed to bring the waverers down on the side of the champion of Turkish nationalism, it would have been the action of the Peace Conference in authorising the landing of the Greeks at Smyrna. To Lord Curzon at any rate it was abundantly clear that ever since this unfortunate step, no living Turk could have any feeling except one of profound sympathy with the cause of patriotism and nationality which Mustapha Kemal represented.

Before the end of the year America had ceased to count as a possible factor in the settlement of the Near and Middle East; and on the occasion of a visit to London in November, M. Pichon suggested to Lord Curzon that it was desirable that the matter should be discussed between the two Governments before it was taken in hand by the Peace Conference as a whole. Lord Curzon went further. He would welcome any opportunity, he said, of taking part in such a discussion as a preliminary to more formal proceedings; but he urged consideration of the whole question of a Turkish peace by the Allied Powers with the least possible delay and preferably in London in the course of the coming month.

In due course conversations took place. M. Clemenceau, who had been persuaded to come to London in person, had at first been opposed to the ejection of the Turks from Constantinople. But in course of the discussion of the matter he had been convinced by the arguments brought to bear by Lord Curzon and Mr. Lloyd George and had agreed to the establishment at Constantinople of an international organisation. Further conversations between Lord Curzon and M. Berthelot, towards the end of December, resulted in substantial agreement between France and Great Britain in favour of a settlement on the broad lines consistently advocated by the

British Foreign Minister, and the way at last seemed clear for the negotiation of a satisfactory peace.

No sooner, however, had agreement been reached with France than opposition manifested itself in another quarter. On January the 6th, 1920, the Cabinet met to consider the Eastern question; and, in spite of the fact that on this particular issue he had the powerful support of the Prime Minister, Lord Curzon was defeated on his policy of ejecting the Turk from Europe. The next day he drew up an emphatic protest against this decision.

> "I ask to place on record my earnest and emphatic dissent from the decision arrived at by the majority of the Cabinet yesterday—in opposition to the advice of the Prime Minister and two successive Foreign Secretaries—to retain the Turk in Constantinople. I believe this to be a short-sighted and, in the long run, a most unfortunate decision.
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> "In order to avoid trouble in India—largely manufactured and in any case ephemeral—and to render our task in Egypt less difficult—its difficulty being in reality almost entirely independent of what we may do or not do at Constantinople—we are losing an opportunity for which Europe has waited nearly five centuries, and which may not recur. The idea of a respectable and docile Turkish Government at Constantinople, preserved from its hereditary vices by a military cordon of the Powers—including be it remembered, a permanent British garrison of 10,000 to 15,000 men—is in my judgment a chimera. Nor will it be found that the decision, if carried into effect in Paris, will either solve the Turkish problem or calm the Eastern World.
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> "The Turk at Constantinople must have very different measure meted out to him from the Turk at Konia. He will retain a Sovereignty which will have to be a mere simulacrum, and those who have saved him will, unless I am mistaken, presently discover that his rescue has neither satisfied him nor pacified Islam. But beyond all I regret that the main object for which the war in the East was fought and the sacrifice of Gallipoli endured—namely the liberation of Europe from the

Ottoman Turk—has after an almost incredible expenditure of life and treasure been thrown away in the very hour when it has been obtained, and that we shall have left to our descendants—who knows after how much further sacrifice and suffering?—a task from which we have flinched.

"I may add that the refusal of the Cabinet to endorse the scheme prepared by M. Berthelot and myself was resolved on without any consideration by them of what the rival scheme will be, i.e., a Turkish State still centred at Constantinople but under international supervision. When produced it may cause some surprise."

His own share in the proceedings caused him endless worry. "I have been presiding all the morning over Allied Conferences," he told Lady Curzon on March the 11th, "and am now, 3 p.m., trying to piece together some material for my two speeches this afternoon. I am worried by it all, for the Treaty with Turkey is going badly and we are in for great trouble at Constantinople."

It is on record in Lord Curzon's own handwriting[1] that, following upon this decision, the principles of a Treaty to be imposed upon Turkey were laid down at a meeting of the Supreme Council presided over by Mr. Lloyd George in Downing Street; that a Conference of the Ambassadors under his own chairmanship was charged with the task of filling in the details in accordance with the principles laid down; and that the Treaty in its final form was debated and decided in Mr. Lloyd George's presence and largely under his influence at San Remo in the following April.

The Treaty thus agreed upon at the Conference at San Remo contained two outstanding provisions to which Lord Curzon had always been opposed and against the acceptance of which he had constantly striven. In accordance with the decision of the Cabinet above referred to the Turk was to remain in Europe; and, as if in the nature of a set off to this, a Greek enclave was to be recognised in the coastal region of Asia Minor with Smyrna as its centre. Up to the last moment Lord Curzon used his influence against what he regarded as a fatal decision. Shortly before the meeting at

[1] In a Memorandum written by Lord Curzon and kept with his private papers.

San Remo he caused to be circulated to the Cabinet a Despatch from the British High Commissioner at Constantinople in which the latter, after explaining that the views which he put forward were shared by his advisers—" men for the most part with life-long experience of Near Eastern affairs "—described the provisional occupation of Smyrna by the Greeks as " the canker in the Near Eastern situation since last May," and asserted that its proposed perpetuation would be a canker for years to come, a constant irritant which would lead to bloodshed in Asia Minor for generations. Did the British people realise, Admiral de Robeck asked, that the proposal to dismember Ottoman provinces of Turkey in the interests of Greece would drive the remaining Turks into the arms of the Bolsheviks and set the Near East and all Central Asia aflame ? But the die had been cast and Lord Curzon's warnings remained unheeded.

The document embodying the decisions of the San Remo Conference, which came to be known as the Treaty of Sèvres, was signed at that place on August the 10th, 1920, by the representatives of the thirteen nations associated, for one reason or another, with the negotiation of peace in the Near East. Little more need be said of it, for by the time that it had been finally approved and signed it had ceased to be within the sphere of what was practical. Throughout the months during which the Allied Powers had been pondering the matter, Mustapha Kemal had been consolidating his position. Depicting the Sultan in Constantinople as a puppet in the hands of the Powers, he had appealed with complete success to the sentiment of the Turkish people. He had, in fact, set on foot a formidable movement which, with great dexterity, he presented to the Turkish people, sometimes in the guise of pan-Islamism with its irresistible appeal to their religious sentiment, at others in the form of pan-Turanianism directed towards the goal of ethnic unity. During the early part of 1920, forces acting at his instigation, if not under his direct orders, had inflicted a heavy defeat on French arms in Cilicia. The French had been compelled to evacuate Marash, the most considerable city of Cilicia, and in the course of their retreat in which they had been accompanied by many thousands of the population, the victorious Turks had indulged in wholesale massacres which had shocked the civilised world. The victims of this holocaust, in the

main Armenians, were variously estimated at from 15,000 to 30,000 souls. Mustapha Kemal had shown, however, that he possessed considerable constructive ability. A National Assembly had been convened, Government institutions had been set up; and by the time that the twenty-six representatives of the thirteen nations had appended their signatures to the Treaty of Sèvres, Mustapha Kemal, claiming for his Government in the highlands of Anatolia, that it was the true fount of Turkish nationality, found himself strong enough to repudiate the action of the Sultan's Government in assenting to the document and on behalf of the Turkish people to reject absolutely the terms embodied in it.

Mustapha Kemal had not miscalculated. The Treaty of Sèvres remained a dead letter, and early in 1921, representatives of the *de jure* Government in Constantinople and of the *de facto* Government in Angora were invited to London to discuss the matter. The Conference which ensued, if it did nothing else, proved beyond all reasonable doubt that so far as Turkey was concerned, the real force lay at Angora and not at Constantinople. Proposals were eventually put forward by the Allies with a view to bringing about a peace between Greece and Turkey. They met with no success because, to Lord Curzon's profound regret, they were brought to nought by the military operations embarked on by the Greeks. Though it was not apparent at the time, this shortsighted action on their part was in reality the first step towards their ultimate ruin.

The Conference, at which mediation was offered, was held at St. James's Palace in March, and was presided over by Mr. Lloyd George himself. Yet for all the proceedings at the Conference, the Greek delegates undoubtedly gained the impression during their stay in London that the British Prime Minister would not in his heart be sorry to see the proposals for mediation rejected and a renewal of the Greek offensive. Mr. Lloyd George had certainly never attempted to disguise his personal sympathy for the Greeks throughout their struggle against the Turks; and at a later date—in August 1922—the Greek authorities were undoubtedly encouraged to continue the fight at a critical moment in their history by his openly proclaimed sympathy with them. It is necessary to make this clear, since it has a definite bearing upon the attempt

which was subsequently made to hold Lord Curzon responsible for the disaster which befell them. No greater injustice could have been done Lord Curzon than to attribute to him a calamity which, as the narrative will make clear, he strove throughout to avert.

With the failure of the Conference of March, 1921, the Near Eastern question may be said to have entered upon its second phase.

CHAPTER XVII

THE NEAR EASTERN QUESTION: THE SECOND PHASE

1921-1922

The failure of the Treaty of Sèvres and of the subsequent Conference was followed by disastrous results. It led for one thing to the insertion of a fresh wedge into the solidarity of the Alliance. Relations between France and Britain, by no means always smooth, sometimes, as has been seen, strained almost to breaking point, now developed fresh points of difference in the Near East. Relations between Great Britain and Italy were similarly affected. Conscious of the impotence of the Government in Constantinople and of the growing strength of Mustapha Kemal in Asia Minor, the representatives of both France and Italy took advantage of the presence in London of delegates of the National Government at Angora to negotiate with them, independently and without the knowledge of the British Foreign Minister, agreements affecting interests of their own in Asiatic Turkey.

The action of the French Government, when in due course it was made known to the British Foreign Office, was defended on the ground that Mr. Lloyd George had been informed verbally by M. Briand, if not of the actual details at least of the general lines on which he was proceeding—a method of conducting business which it was admitted in these days of stress sometimes superseded the efforts of the old diplomacy. The defence was not one which was calculated to appease Lord Curzon who, not unnaturally, saw in it a striking illustration of the evil results following upon the employment of unorthodox methods, and particularly of indepen-

dent action by others, in matters falling strictly within the ambit of the Foreign Office.

The matter proved of little actual importance for, as events turned out, neither the French nor the Italian Agreement was ratified by Mustapha Kemal's National Assembly at Angora. And, commenting upon the matter at a later date, Lord Curzon remarked that, as for the pro-Kemalist policy of the Italian Government, he was able to point out " with a certain amount of sardonic satisfaction " that it had proved a dismal failure, inasmuch as, while the Agreement had been repudiated by the Turks, the Italians had found themselves in so perilous a position at Adalia that they had been obliged to withdraw from that port.

Nevertheless the fact that these things had been done was not without significance ; for it showed that on the slippery ground of the Near and Middle East distinct divergence of aim had opened out between France and Italy on the one hand and Great Britain on the other. It showed also that where their own particular interests were concerned, the Governments of these two countries were prepared to make terms with the Government in Angora, whether such terms did or did not conflict with the provisions of the Treaty of Sèvres to which they had been signatories, and without deeming it necessary to take the Foreign Minister of their principal Ally into their confidence.

Later in the year Lord Curzon found himself faced with a definite Franco-Turkish Agreement, negotiated, once again, without his knowledge, by a well-known French Parliamentary leader, M. Franklin-Bouillon, and known thereafter as the Franklin-Bouillon Agreement. M. Franklin-Bouillon had been described, when his visits to Angora had first attracted attention, as a private person travelling in Asia Minor for purposes of his own, and later on as having some sort of an official mission to negotiate on behalf of the French Government with regard to French prisoners, the protection of minorities in Cilicia and other matters incident to the evacuation of that area by French troops. To an Agreement of a purely local character little exception need, perhaps, have been taken. But when, after its signature on October the 20th, 1921, it was communicated to the Foreign Office, it certainly appeared to cover a very much

wider field. It wore, in fact, much more the appearance of a separate Treaty of Peace entered into by one of the Allies with an enemy Government without consultation with the rest. Among other things, it appeared to restore to Turkey a large and fertile tract of territory, including places of great strategic importance in relation to Mesopotamia, which, although by arrangement among the Allies under the Mandate of the French, had nevertheless been conquered by British arms; places, therefore, which could not, without the violation of solemn engagements entered into by the principal Allies, be bartered away in the absence of their consent. It led to important correspondence between the French and British Governments, the former of which admitted that when peace was finally concluded the various agreements which had been entered into, including the Franklin-Bouillon Agreement, would require to be adjusted with a view to taking their place in a general settlement. Harmony was thus outwardly restored. But the episode was one which left behind it an unpleasant taste, and the divergence between French and British aims in the Near and Middle East, though brushed aside, in fact remained.

It was not, indeed, denied that such sympathy as the French people had entertained for Greece had been alienated by the action of her people, following upon a plebiscite taken on December the 5th, 1920, in recalling the ex-King Constantine to the throne. And there can be little doubt that from this time onward Turkey's pretensions were increased and her attitude stiffened by the belief that French sympathy was on her side. On the other hand the Prime Minister of Great Britain had never disguised his pro-Greek leanings. It was generally assumed that it had been at his suggestion that the Greeks had been invited by the Paris Peace Conference to land troops at Smyrna. And, during the London Conference held early in 1921, Lord Curzon, attempting to steer a course midway between the Scylla of French and Italian support of Turkey and the Charybdis of his own Prime Minister's enthusiasm for Greece, had found his position a sufficiently embarrassing one. "This afternoon we meet at St. James's Palace to hear the Greeks," he wrote on February the 21st. "The Prime Minister is as convinced a Venizelist and phil-Hellene as ever, and uses all the advantage of his position as

chairman in that direction."[1] This divergence of sympathies between the Prime Minister of Great Britain and the Governments of France and Italy was fraught with disastrous consequences. It encouraged each of the belligerents to carry on the struggle—a struggle which ended, as will be seen hereafter, in bringing Greece to ruin and, incidentally, in bringing Mr. Lloyd George's Government to the ground.

When it became clear that the negotiations carried on in London during the opening months of 1921 were doomed to failure, hostilities broke out once more on the plateaux of Asia Minor. And the immediate task of the Allies became that of preventing an extension of the conflagration. The task was far from easy. Undeterred by an initial reverse, the Greeks spent the summer of 1921 in preparing for a fresh offensive; and in June Lord Curzon proceeded to Paris in the hope of securing from the Allies an offer of mediation. In the event of Greece placing herself in their hands, he was prepared to meet French views to the extent of recognising the altered balance of power in the Near East due to the rise of the Kemalist Government, which he described at a meeting of the Imperial Conference on June the 22nd, as having created a body of national sentiment and of military strength which appealed as the main source of its national unity to the duty of evicting the Greeks from Smyrna. And he put before the Conference in Paris a proposal for the creation of an autonomous province, with Smyrna as its capital, under Turkish Sovereignty, to be administered by a Christian Governor with the assistance of a body of gendarmerie under European officers; all Greek troops to be withdrawn as soon as the gendarmerie were in a position to ensure the security of the province. Nothing came either of this or of any other of the proposals discussed in Paris, for the reason that the Greeks, hopeful of the success of their impending attack, refused to place themselves in the hands of the Allies.

Autumn had a sobering effect. The Greeks, it is true, indulged in offical celebrations of the victory which they claimed to have won. But while *Te Deums* were being sung in the churches of Athens, public rejoicings at the success of Turkish arms were being held in Angora and thanksgivings offered up in the mosques of Anatolia.

[1]Letter to Lady Curzon.

"We are reminded of the battle of Jutland," Lord Curzon wrote, "which was simultaneously celebrated as a triumph in London and Berlin." The opinion of unbiassed persons was that for the time being, at any rate, the position as between the opposing forces was that of stalemate.

In October the Greek Prime Minister, M. Gounaris, accompanied by MM. Baltazzis and Rangabé, travelled to London and, after discussing the position in its various aspects with Lord Curzon, agreed to place himself in his hands. The time seemed ripe, therefore, for a further attempt to reach a settlement; and Lord Curzon drew up a list of the modifications of the Treaty of Sèvres which seemed necessary to meet the altered situation, for submission to his colleagues.

Apart altogether from the actual terms of a possible peace, the question of procedure was a matter of the utmost importance. On three separate occasions the efforts of the Powers had been rendered futile and their authority flouted; and Lord Curzon saw little advantage, consequently, in their intervention unless, having agreed upon the principles of the settlement which they desired, they were prepared to enforce them upon the combatants. And he proposed, therefore, a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Great Britain, France and Italy for the purpose of arriving at an Agreement on these all important matters. Assuming that agreement was reached both upon the terms to be offered and the steps to be taken to ensure their being accepted, he next proposed a meeting of the Supreme Council in Constantinople at which the Treaty of Peace should be laid before the belligerents.

At the end of December he communicated his proposals, which had in the meantime received the approval of the Cabinet, to the French and Italian Governments; and a meeting of their respective Foreign Ministers was arranged for the middle of January for the purpose of discussing them. Yet once more fate intervened to postpone these much needed conversations, for early in January M. Briand fell and M. Poincaré stepped into his place.

The crisis which resulted in this change in the Government of France was a clear indication that the French people had instinctively realised that the rift which had opened between the two countries

over Silesia during the previous summer had not after all been closed but had, on the contrary, widened. The crisis itself was, in fact, due to a sudden realisation on the part of the French that the policy of M. Briand, which was directed towards closer co-operation with Great Britain, was not in reality the policy which they desired to pursue. For some time past this trend of French opinion had been gathering force. Silesia in the summer had been followed by the Washington Conference in the autumn; and the Washington Conference, whatever it might be thought to have achieved, was regarded by the people of France as having been for them nothing but a humiliation.

Such, then, was the atmosphere in France when early in January 1922, the Supreme Council met at Cannes. No one knew better than Mr. Lloyd George himself how essential it was to the success of his own programme that M. Briand should continue in office. And to that end he was at last willing to offer him the Treaty of Guarantee that France had so long and so urgently desired. In face of these greater issues, the Near Eastern question became for the British Prime Minister a troublesome matter which must by one means or another be got out of the way. At Cannes, therefore, the hard facts of the situation were placed with complete candour before M. Gounaris. A settlement of the Near Eastern question, he was informed, had been made a condition of the proposed British Treaty of Guarantee to France. This at least might be accounted unto Great Britain for righteousness by the statesmen of Greece. But—and here was the naked and bitter truth realised at last, seemingly, by the British Prime Minister—no settlement of the Near Eastern question was possible unless the Greek forces were withdrawn from Smyrna. British feeling for Greece, Mr. Lloyd George went on to explain, while fundamentally unchanged, had lost something of its fervour as a result of the return to power and to the affections of his people of the ex-King Constantine. In these circumstances they could expect no active assistance from Great Britain if they decided on a renewal of war with Turkey; and unless they were prepared to fight it out alone he advised them to place themselves unreservedly in Lord Curzon's hands.

No concessions to M. Briand, however—not even this advice to

Greece nor the accompanying promise of the Treaty of Guarantee—were to prove sufficient to avert the crisis. In the eyes of all France Mr. Lloyd George had become the embodiment of everything that they most disliked in the British people. He was regarded as the most sinister advocate of a pro-German and pro-Russian policy, and as the personification, consequently, of the particular characteristic which they traditionally imputed to the inhabitants of Albion. It needed nothing but a sign that at Cannes M. Briand was running in harness with Mr. Lloyd George to ensure his downfall. "Ah, Briand," exclaimed one who occupied a prominent position in the political life of France, on the eve of the French Premier's departure for the Riviera, "vous êtes déjà allé à Canossa. Prenez garde que vous n'alliez pas à Cannes aussi!" And it is at least a plausible supposition that, in the state of nervous tension in which the French public watched events at Cannes, it was in the photographs of the French Premier meekly accepting instruction from Mr. Lloyd George in the art of swinging a golf club, which were published broadcast in the Press, that they found the sign which they sought. At any rate, events in Paris following closely upon this display of enterprise on the part of the pictorial Press, necessitated M. Briand's abrupt return to the capital. In spite of his appeal, which had all the appearance of success, for the continued support of his colleagues and the Chamber, he decided to tender his resignation. And before the delegates at Cannes had time to realise what was taking place, M. Briand had been supplanted by M. Poincaré.

From the Riviera Lord Curzon hurried back to Paris and on January the 16th was received by the new French Premier. He went straight to the heart of the Near Eastern problem. At Cannes only a day or two before, he explained, M. Briand and the Italian Foreign Minister had accepted his proposals as a suitable basis for discussion. How soon would M. Poincaré be prepared to take up the threads where they had been dropped? Would the following week be possible? It was scarcely possible to overstate the urgency of the matter. The Italian Foreign Minister awaited only a summons at the end of the telegraph line. It was not too much to say that the whole peace of the East was trembling in the balance.

M. Poincaré was not to be hurried. He was on the contrary

exasperatingly deliberate. In one respect he resembled Lord Curzon himself—he entertained an abiding passion for his pen. It has, indeed, been said of him that " if statistics and tabulated data were the sum of human existence, and the rules of geometry and algebra the bases of all human knowledge, Poincaré would certainly be the greatest public man of his generation."[1] And it was entirely in keeping with his reputation that he should have decided that before he could undertake to discuss the matter he would draw up his observations on Lord Curzon's proposals in writing.

Here was a promise of the very delay that Lord Curzon was above all things anxious to avoid. Delay had been fatal in the past and had been a main cause of the humiliating position in which the Powers had long been floundering. Now, thanks to the season of the year, a little time had been vouchsafed to them in which to repair previous errors. Snow lay deep on the plateaux of Asia Minor, and while snow lasted the hope of a settlement lived. But January was already slipping by, and an exchange of Notes such as M. Poincaré contemplated might absorb weeks of precious time. By March or April climatic conditions would favour a resumption of hostilities, and with fighting once more in progress what hope would there be for the methods of diplomacy ?

But M. Poincaré was adamant. Of one thing he was absolutely certain, and that was that at the present time French public opinion was strongly opposed to Conferences. And he held French public opinion in extreme respect. Conversations were the most he was prepared to contemplate, and these not until the whole question had been exhaustively explored by means of written Notes.

If in other respects the interview was disappointingly infructuose, it at least left Lord Curzon in no doubt upon one point, and that was, that in no circumstances was M. Poincaré going to do anything that savoured even remotely of rendering assistance to the Greeks. And when in due course the Note promised by him reached the Foreign Office, Lord Curzon, realising that with the fall of M. Briand the prospect of agreement in face of the Near Eastern menace had become infinitely remote, cancelled his intended visit to Paris. And while a further exchange of written commentaries was taking

[1] By Mr. F. H. Simonds in " How Europe made peace without America."

place between Downing Street and the Quai D'Orsay the Italian Government fell, thus placing a further obstacle in the way of the long delayed conversations.

In the meantime the position of the Greek army was steadily deteriorating and the coffers of the Greek treasury were becoming exhausted. Attempts which had been made for some months past to raise a loan in London had been unsuccessful, and on February the 15th M. Gounaris penned a letter to Lord Curzon, which, because of the use which was subsequently made of it, acquired an undeserved notoriety. After referring to the delay to which the promised conversations between the Allied Powers had been subjected, the Greek Prime Minister set out the factors which were tending to alter the military situation to the disadvantage of his country, laying special stress upon the inability of the Greek Government, in the absence of immediate financial help, to meet the necessary expenditure on the upkeep of the army, and commenting pointedly on the steady increase in the supply of military equipment and munitions which was reaching Mustapha Kemal's forces.

> "Not to mention the war material which he has been able to procure from Soviet Russia, we cannot but note with painful surprise the attitude taken up in this connection by the Allied Powers, by whose side the Greek army participated in the war which Turkey had declared not against Greece but against the Allies. Certain of these Allied Powers have gone so far as to supply the enemy with arms and munitions to be used against their Ally in the great war."

To redress the balance three things were essential; (i) reinforcements to neutralise the growing Turkish superiority in mere numbers, (ii) fresh supplies of war material, and (iii) immediate financial aid. The first of these Greece could supply herself; for the other two she must look elsewhere. But unless all three were promptly provided, the Greek Command considered that any offensive movement on the part of the Turks would expose the Greek army to very serious danger. In the event of no such assistance being practicable, the Greek Command had asked that orders might be given for a withdrawal of the Greek forces while there was yet

time to take the initiative, before being forced to it by the development of the situation.

Having thus set forth the position in detail in his letter to Lord Curzon, M. Gounaris proceeded to address Mr. Lloyd George, repeating in an abbreviated form the substance of his Note to the British Foreign Minister, explaining that lack of financial resources and shortage of war material must expose the Greek army to grave danger as soon as the campaigning season set in, and asking the favour of an interview before his early return to Athens. To this latter request Mr. Lloyd George was unable to accede.

In Lord Curzon's eyes, the state of affairs disclosed by M. Gounaris added yet one more cause for regret at the delay which had been forced upon him by M. Poincaré, and provided a further reason for urging an early resumption of the conversations which had been broken off at Cannes. In early action by the Allied Powers lay, in his opinion, the best hope of staving off disaster; and after expressing the hope that the military position in Anatolia was "less immediately critical" than M. Gounaris feared, he urged that the wisest course was unquestionably "to expedite the diplomatic solution of the anxious position in which all were placed."[1] An Italian Ministry having now been formed, he had hastened to propose a meeting in Paris within the next few days. On the question of the withdrawal of the Greek forces he ventured no opinion, since this appeared to be a matter for the Greek authorities themselves. Nor was it necessary for him to do so, since M. Gounaris had already telegraphed on February the 28th authorising the Greek Command to proceed immediately to such measures preliminary to withdrawal as they might consider necessary for avoiding danger to the army.

From the time of his receipt of M. Gounaris's Note, one dominant idea occupied Lord Curzon's mind—to secure the agreement of the belligerents to an Armistice, to be followed by the peaceful evacuation of Anatolia by the Greek forces. And it is easy to understand his feelings of exasperation when into the main stream of his diplomatic effort there suddenly flowed one of those cross currents from which the Foreign Policy of Great Britain with her world-wide interests and responsibilities can never be certain of being free.

[1] Letter from Lord Curzon to M. Gounaris, dated March the 6th, 1922.

EASTERN QUESTION: SECOND PHASE

The presence in England of the Greek Prime Minister, combined with the absence of any visible attempt on the part of the British Government to reach a settlement of the Near Eastern trouble by diplomatic means, gave rise to mischievous rumour. And in India rumour, once started, sped rapidly from mouth to mouth in the mosques and bazaars where Moslems congregated, that it was in contemplation to render Greece such financial and material aid as would enable her to impose by force upon the Turkish people a peace which would shatter dreams to which the valour of Mustapha Kemal's army had given rise. The rapid spread of rumour to this effect fanned into open flame once more the smouldering embers of the Khilafat agitation.

As custodians of the interests of seventy million Indian Moslems, the Government of India had steadily urged upon the Home Government their view of the extent to which this factor in the case should be borne in mind by those charged with the negotiation of a peace with Turkey. And, perturbed by the menace of a renewal of grave Muhammadan unrest, the Viceroy forwarded to the Secretary of State yet one more strongly worded representation on the subject, together with a request that he might be authorised to publish it. On March the 4th, without consultation with any of his colleagues and without seeking the sanction of the Cabinet, Mr. Montagu telegraphed his consent.

With negotiations of extreme delicacy on this very question about to take place in Paris where, as Lord Curzon was only too well aware, not the least of his difficulties would be to overcome the strong pro-Turkish leanings of the French Government, this unauthorised publication of the similarly pro-Turkish pronouncement of the Indian Government came as a tremendous shock. How greatly his feelings were outraged is abundantly clear from the tone of the letter in which he set forth the grounds of his complaint to Mr. Chamberlain, as leader of the Unionist Party in the House of Commons :

> " Look at the position in which it has placed me. I am about, by desire of the Government, to enter into negotiations of the utmost difficulty in Paris in which the dice are already

loaded heavily against me and in which my chances of success are small. Just at this moment, on the eve of the Conference, my pitch is queered, my hand is shattered, by the declaration from a branch of the British Government, claiming far more for the Turks than even in their wildest moments they have dared to ask for themselves, or than it is possible for any British statesman to concede. When I argue to Mustapha Kemal or to Poincaré about Adrianople or the Straits they have merely to brandish against me this fatal declaration. I have now no desire to go to Paris at all. I conceive that my mission is doomed by the act of one of my colleagues to certain and inevitable failure. . .

"If the policy of H.M.G. is the policy of the Viceroy and Montagu, then let Montagu go to Paris in my place, and fight to obtain Adrianople and Thrace and the Holy places for his beloved Turks. He will then have the failure which his own action will have rendered inevitable instead of thrusting it upon me. I shall be glad if you will show this letter to the Prime Minister at once. It is written in bed, hence the pencil. I would ask for a Cabinet this morning to discuss the matter, were I not too ill. But matters cannot rest where they are, for in that case I cannot undertake my task."[1]

The Prime Minister was only a little less angry than Lord Curzon, and Mr. Montagu's resignation became inevitable. It is but fair to his memory, however, to state that, whatever the lack of judgment which he displayed in assuming responsibility for the publication of so confidential a Despatch, and however great the embarrassment that he consequently caused to the Foreign Minister on the eve of negotiations of supreme importance, his action did have a very marked effect in laying what, from the comfortable distance of Whitehall, Lord Curzon characterised as "a factitious agitation," but which, to those in India who were called upon to cope with it, had all the appearance of a movement fraught with the possibility of very real trouble.

With this sensational and unfortunate episode disposed of, Lord

[1]Letter dated March the 9th, 1922.

Curzon turned his attention to his negotiations once more. On March the 16th and 18th he saw in his study at 1 Carlton House Terrace, which had witnessed so many fateful gatherings, the representatives of the Constantinople and Angora Governments who were then in London, and promised that he would endeavour to secure the evacuation of Anatolia by the Greeks, provided always that the Turks would accept an Armistice as an essential preliminary condition. A note of his conversations was submitted to the Cabinet, whom he met on March the 20th; and the French and Italian Governments were urged by him to join in insisting on an immediate truce as a first condition of successful mediation. No one, indeed, could have worked harder or more wholeheartedly to secure a settlement which should be just and honourable to both disputants. Throughout the ten sittings of the Paris Conference, held on March 22nd-25th, he took the lead; and the Pronouncement issued at its conclusion, in which the results of their labours were made known to the world, was the work of his own pen. "Sitting as we are doing for six or seven hours in the day with barely time for meals," he wrote on March the 25th, "I only have a moment to say that the Conference is ending far better for us than I had deemed possible, and that I shall come back with a plan which I think it quite likely that the Turks may ultimately refuse, but which will approve itself to the public opinion of the world as a just and generous solution."[1]

The main provisions of the settlement, to which he had secured the adhesion of M. Poincaré and Signor Schanzer, were the progressive retirement of the Greek forces from Anatolia under the supervision of Allied officers; the formulation, in the first place, by an inter-Allied Conference, of a new code for the protection of minorities in both Greece and Turkey; the execution of this new code of International Law to be entrusted to the League of Nations; an invitation to the League of Nations to co-operate in finding a solution of the Armenian question, with the object of obtaining for the Armenian people the satisfaction of their traditional aspirations for a National Home; demilitarised zones on both shores of the Straits and a zone of Allied military occupation, embracing the

[1] Letter to Mr., afterwards Sir, Austen Chamberlain.

Gallipoli Peninsular as far as Rodosto on the Sea of Marmora; an International Straits Commission to control the navigation of those waters; the reversion of Constantinople to Turkey and the creation of a demilitarised zone of considerable extent, circling the city and serving as a cushion between the city and that part of Eastern Thrace assigned to Greece; the speedy abolition of conscription in Turkey and a strict limitation of the strength of any future Turkish force recruited on a voluntary basis; the grant to Turkey of increased financial control, and a modification of the Capitulations.

The materialisation of this carefully thought out settlement depended upon one thing—the acceptance of an Armistice. That was the foundation upon which the superstructure was to be erected. The Pronouncement which had been issued represented the plans and drawings of the architects—no more. Until it was known whether those primarily concerned would consent to the foundations being laid, the builders could not get to work. They were never even called in, because after an ominous delay the Angora Government declined to call a halt to their military operations. And, though the Greek Government signified their acceptance of a truce, it is more than likely that their action would not have been ratified by the Greek people. The publication of the Pronouncement with the outline of the suggested settlement excited, indeed, a storm of passionate indignation which swept tumultuously over the country. Single copies of a Greek newspaper which came out with a headline in huge letters, consisting of a single word of opprobrium applied to the Allies, sold for as much as ten drachmas. In the Greek Chamber M. Gounaris was vehemently assailed by the Opposition, whose spokesmen declared that Mr. Lloyd George had stated officially that victorious Greece deserved more even than the Treaty of Sèvres had given her. Once more, therefore, Europe looked on while Greece and Turkey prepared to rekindle the fires of destruction on her borders; and not for the first time the representatives of the Powers who had won the war stood by, wringing their hands in impotent ill-humour at their failure to extinguish the conflagration.

It has seemed desirable to narrate, somewhat fully, the story of these abortive negotiations on account of the misapprehensions

as to the part played in them by Lord Curzon which subsequently arose. To this reference will be made in due course. It is not necessary to deal at any length with developments during the summer of 1922 which followed on the failure of the Paris Conference of March, for Lord Curzon was prostrated by illness and was unable, therefore, to take any leading part in them.

The summer of 1922 was, indeed, a melancholy one for him. To the chronic weakness in his back and leg was now added a severe attack of phlebitis, which kept him chained to his bed at Hackwood from the end of May to the middle of July. During this time he carried on much of the work of the Foreign Office from his bed. But it was obvious that there were many duties falling to the lot of the Foreign Minister which could not conveniently be discharged from a bed of sickness; and at the end of May, when it seemed likely that his recovery must be a matter of time, Mr. Lloyd George proposed that Lord Balfour should take his place for the remainder of the Session. To this Lord Curzon agreed, though he was morbidly sensitive to any suggestion that the state of his health might render his retirement from so onerous a post desirable. "I accepted," he jotted down in pencil on a sheet of paper. "Balfour had not the least intention of supplanting me and only consented as an act of kindness." But he was not so certain that the intentions of the Prime Minister were purely disinterested, and he added to his note a disturbing surmise as to what might be in process of being planned —"But when the Session ended, and the Foreign Office and public had become used to my absence and its cause, Balfour was to retire and" A or B or perhaps even C "was to take my place."

His recovery was retarded by worry over such possibilities and by his old enemy insomnia to which such thoughts gave rise. Nothing that might possibly prove effective in inducing sorely needed slumber was neglected. Even hypnotism was given a trial, and there is a touch of the old humour in the description which he penned of the solitary attempt which was made to exorcise insomnia by this means.

> "Yesterday was a woeful night. He (the practitioner) discoursed for the best part of an hour about his method, the

conscious self, the sub-conscious self and Heaven knows what. I said, 'Tell me only what you propose to do.' He offered to come at 11.30 p.m."

In due course the hypnotist returned and the séance began.

"He stood at the end of the bed, made me look at a gold ring on his finger, talked hard all the time about the certainty that I would have a quiet night, a tranquil night, restful sleep, no more worry, the sub-conscious self fulfilling itself; then told me to close my eyes; went on chattering; declared I could not open them (which I found not the slightest difficulty in doing); announced that in half a minute, one minute, two minutes I should be fast asleep, and finally after half an hour of this foolish chatter, left me far more wide awake than when he came. However, I did my best, kept my eyes closed, thought of nothing, gave full chance to the sub-conscious self, and after one and a half hours was as wide awake as at noonday—nay more so. Then I took under his instructions my drug which failed to operate at all. . . So that experiment is over. I can understand its being successful with a wounded Tommy. But with my brain all afire and resenting assurances which I knew to be a fraud, it was no good."[1]

There was the root of the trouble—his brain was always "all afire"; and rumours which now began to circulate in the Press fanned it to a devouring flame. "I dare not put anything about myself in the papers," he wrote on May the 17th, "or the *Daily Express* will continue its clamour for me to resign." And on the next day—"The *Daily Express* announces (for obvious reasons) that I am very seriously ill and that my friends are very anxious about me." He kept a vigilant eye on all that happened in London: "I was greatly tickled at Arthur's maiden speech in the House of Lords being followed by a smashing Government defeat. What will all the people say who thought he was sent there to charm and subdue the Salisbury group and to save the Government from the rebuffs which I incurred?"

July saw him still a prisoner at Hackwood and bitterly resentful

[1]Letter to Lady Curzon, dated May the 18th, 1922.

of attacks upon him in the Press. "This morning I was thrown back by reading the two vile paras in *The Times* and *Daily Mail*, a part of their ceaseless vendetta against me. . . I am, indeed, ill-treated, for the Northcliffe people will not spare me even in my illness and seem bent on getting me out alive or dead."[1]

At Orleans, whither he went in the middle of July, the phlebitis responded to treatment and his spirits rose. "I am going out this afternoon on foot," he wrote on July the 29th, "to see the houses of the various Royal improprieties, Diane le Poitiers, Agnès de Sorel, etc., who seem to have found an attraction in this place of which I can discover no relics."[2] And early in August with his veins restored, but weak and shaken by constant pain and sleeplessness, he returned to London.

[1] This and the previous quotations are from letters to Lady Curzon.
[2] Letter to Mr. A. W. Keith-Falconer.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE GATHERING STORM

1922

As the year 1922 wore on Lord Curzon found his position growing more difficult. The Near Eastern question was not the only one on which his view differed *au fond* from that of the Prime Minister. He viewed with grave misgiving and with a strong personal dislike the tendency which Mr. Lloyd George displayed to seek a *rapprochement* with Soviet Russia. And, if his illness during the summer caused him infinite distress, it at least saved him from the embarrassment of accompanying the Prime Minister to Genoa, where Mr. Lloyd George had planned to receive representatives from Moscow.

The idea of a great gathering of the nations at Genoa seems first to have formed in Mr. Lloyd George's mind after the Washington Conference in November 1921. It was discussed with M. Briand in London in December and it was further elaborated at Cannes. It was to be no hole-and-corner meeting of the representatives of one or two interested Governments, but something more of the nature of a World Parliament, at which not France and Italy only but America, Germany and Bolshevist Russia were to meet in happy concord round a common board. The realisation of this ambitious project was defeated before ever the Conference assembled, by the attitude towards it first of America and then of France, as will be explained hereafter. But in spite of all discouragement preparations were proceeded with and, in the end, invitations were actually issued to, and accepted by, the Governments of no less than twenty-seven countries.

There is no need to question the sincerity of Mr. Lloyd George's belief that in a Conference of this kind, at which outstanding questions of every sort could be discussed by representatives of all the countries of the civilised world, was to be found the best hope of a solution of those economic troubles from which Great Britain herself was so sorely suffering. He possessed a mind which was at all times receptive of new ideas. The policy of wringing from Germany the uttermost farthing, with which he had proceeded to Paris in 1919, had already been discarded, and had given place to ideas on the real nature of the economic problem suggested by the writings of Professor Keynes. The theories put forward by Professor Keynes had been reinforced by the hard facts of the economic situation in the United Kingdom, of which the weekly statement of the number of the unemployed was at once the most dramatic and the most sinister example. During the year 1921 unemployment had risen with alarming rapidity, so much so that the number of unemployed persons shown by the Ministry of Labour as being in receipt of aid under the Unemployed Insurance Act of 1920, stood at the end of the year 1921 at a figure only a little short of 2,000,000. No one of Mr. Lloyd George's perception needed to be told that, with industrial depression of this kind weighing upon the population, there lurked very real danger to the stability of the country in the continued economic stagnation of the Continent.

But there is good reason for supposing that, in the eyes of those who believed that in the circumstances of the time the retention in office of a Coalition Government was in the highest degree desirable, much advantage might be reaped at home from the success of a gathering planned on the scale and with the objects of the Genoa Conference. The prestige and popularity of the Government were not what they had been. At home their position was threatened by the growing revolt of the Conservative party against the leadership of Mr. Lloyd George; while, abroad, the prestige of the British Prime Minister was suffering from the wave of hostility which was surging across France and finding clamorous expression in the Parisian Press. And there were many excellent reasons for supposing that at any moment the political stock of the Cabinet might experience a further fall. At the beginning of 1922 there were at least

some assets. Lord Balfour's striking success at Washington towards the end of 1921 was one ; the Irish Treaty was another. Yet no one knew better than those who were specifically charged with the custodianship of the Government's interests, that when the Cabinet were called upon to deal with all the questions which must inevitably arise between the two Governments, the Irish Treaty would be likely to prove a rapidly diminishing asset. Neither did they derive much comfort from their contemplation of the impending Budget nor of the work of the Geddes Committee. They plumped, therefore, for an immediate appeal to the Country. And the irritation experienced in certain quarters when this plan was frustrated by the action of Sir George, afterwards Lord, Younger, was reflected in the speeches of the time and notably in Lord Birkenhead's description of Sir George Younger's interference as a display of insubordination on the part of the cabin boy against the authority of the captain.

There remained, however, the Genoa Conference. A spectacular success on an international stage might well redress the balance ; and in the Conference as planned lay the possibility of such success. The presence of America would be welcomed by the British public at large ; that of Germany by the growing volume of opinion that was being alienated by the attitude of France ; that of Russia by the Radical and Labour parties, whose political doctrines were once again emerging from the obscurity into which they had been plunged by the stern realities of four years of war.

It was Mr. Lloyd George's readiness to parley with the representatives of Soviet Russia that Lord Curzon particularly disliked. At the Imperial Conference held in June 1921, he had spoken of the Soviet Administration as " this deplorable Government " ; and he had declined to express any opinion as to the future. " As to the future of Russia I will refrain from speculating. I have no right to make a forecast. It is still the great mystery of Europe, the great dark cloud of the world, and what new forces are germinating behind it I do not know."[1] His hostility was certainly not lessened by time ; for, more than two years later, he was still lamenting that Russia remained under a form of Government which, " though

[1]Speech at the Imperial Conference on June 22nd, 1921.

AT THE IMPERIAL CONFERENCE, October–November 1923

Sitting:– Maharajah of Alwar, Duke of Devonshire, W. F. Massey, Lord Curzon, W. L. Mackenzie King, S. Baldwin, S. M. Bruce, Marquis of Salisbury, General J. C. Smuts, W. L. Warren, Viscount Peel, W. T. Cosgrave.

detestable in its principles and in much of its practice," was quite unlikely to be displaced, and was strong " because every body or agency that could dispute its strength has been eviscerated or destroyed."[1] And, it is not surprising that, holding these views, he looked forward with grave concern to the impending Conference at Genoa. " I hope to get back on Monday evening," he wrote from Paris on March the 25th, 1922. " I cannot commit myself in advance to a solitary recognition (i.e. by Great Britain alone) of the Soviet Government. Whether we recognise them at all must depend entirely upon what they do and to some extent on what others do at Genoa. And I do not think that an unfettered discretion to grant or to refuse recognition ought either to be sought or given."[2]

Glad enough to have escaped the necessity of meeting the representatives of a Government which he regarded as beyond the pale, Lord Curzon looked on at the proceedings at Genoa with mixed feelings from his sick bed in England. Much of the gilt had already been stripped from the proscenium before either the audience or the players had assembled. The belief that America could be persuaded to attend had been quickly dispelled. M. Poincaré had not departed from the view which he had expressed to Lord Curzon immediately after Cannes, that French public opinion was strongly opposed to Conferences. In view of M. Briand's promise to take part, he did not absolutely veto French representation ; but at Boulogne, where he met Mr. Lloyd George, he insisted on a rigid restriction of the scope of the Conference and the exclusion from its purview of Reparations and other matters arising out of the Treaties of Peace ; and, in the end, he delegated the duty of representing French interests to others and shore the gathering of much of its importance by remaining in Paris himself. Finally, the attention of the audience, when at last the curtain was about to be rung up, was directed away from the main performance by a sensational and unannounced *lever de rideau*, cleverly staged without previous notice to the other performers, by Germany and Russia. The Treaty of Alliance which they presented as a contribution of their own to the entertainment—known subsequently as the Treaty of Rapallo—pro-

[1] Speech at the Imperial Conference on October 5th, 1923.
[2] Letter to Mr., afterwards Sir, Austen Chamberlain.

vided a sensation after which everything else fell flat. In Moscow it was hailed as a diplomatic victory of the first order; by the stupefied delegates who had assembled to offer their hands magnanimously, if in some cases a little dubiously, to the outcasts from European society, it was regarded as a clumsy gesture of defiance on the part of the very outlaws whom they had condescended to befriend.

Lord Curzon's fear was lest, stung by these successive disappointments to some last desperate attempt by out-Heroding Herod to restore the position, Great Britain might find herself committed by Mr. Lloyd George to some disastrous Agreement with the Soviet Government. And he confided his fears to Mr. Chamberlain:

> "I am following very closely the Genoa debâcle," he wrote on May the 13th, "and have just been reading the full text of the Russian reply, in which they very clearly refuse the political conditions about propaganda—except it may be in such an anodyne form as to be even more worthless than the corresponding engagements in the Trade Agreement, and still more decline to give the undertaking against helping the Kemalists in Asia Minor. . . In these circumstances, that we should enter into any agreement with the Russians—without being sure on all these points (quite apart from the nature of their rejoinder on the other issues economic and otherwise); that we should still contemplate recognition of them in return for some patched up and illusory agreement, in which everything is thrown forward into the future and that we should even be prepared to do this alone, or with Italy and such other Balkanic States as we may be able to pick up, but without France and Belgium, would seem to be incredible, were it not that I read in the *Daily Chronicle* this morning, to which I look every day for the Prime Minister's views, that the Russian reply is rather a fine document. . . Now you said very justly in your telegram to the Prime Minister that the danger of the situation was in the political rather than in the economic sphere. But, if he is to come home with a proposed recognition of the Soviet on conditions at all like those to which I have referred, I think he

will rend our party, already badly split, from top to bottom and will break up the Government. Every word that I prophesied about the Trade Agreement has turned out to be true. The trade has been a farce, while the propaganda has continued and is still continuing unabated. . . To have dealings with such people is bad at all times. . . But to do it in the conditions described and in order to scrape something out of Genoa would be the nadir of humiliation."

He hoped that he was mistaken in his fears as to what was being done, but he was seriously disturbed :

" Of course nothing of this sort may be in contemplation and I may have misread the signs and symptoms to which I have referred. But, when I reflect that the Prime Minister is alone at Genoa with no Foreign Office to guide him . . . and when I recall the whole trend of his policy for the past three years, I can feel no certainty that we may not find ourselves committed to something differing in all essentials from that to which we gave a reluctant assent, and pregnant with political disaster here. I am no admirer of the present policy of France. But I do not think we can afford to split with her on such an issue as this. I have thought it only a part of my duty to tell you as leader of our wing of the Cabinet what is in my mind, and I do not believe there is a man in the Foreign Office or a British Ambassador in Europe, who would not endorse every word of what I have said."

Mr. Chamberlain's reply came as a great relief to him as is evident from a letter which he wrote to Lady Curzon on May the 16th :

" Chamberlain answered my letter which I wrote while you were here, agreeing with every word of it and saying it is out of the question that we should acknowledge these (people) while things are as they are. Genoa has now finally collapsed and the Prime Minister is coming back with nothing—entirely his own fault. I hope it will be the last of these fantastic

gatherings which are really only designed as a stage on which he is to perform."

Mr. Lloyd George returned from Genoa not more, but less secure than he had been when he started. At any moment a match might be laid to a powder train which would blow up his Government; and by the irony of Fate it was Mr. Lloyd George himself who in the end struck and applied the match.

Throughout the summer the deadlock in the Near East continued, and in July the British Government agreed, though with considerable reluctance, to a French proposal that representatives of the Allies and of the Greek and Turkish Governments should be invited to a preliminary Conference to discuss the Paris terms of March, without prior acceptance by the belligerents either of an Armistice or of the general principles underlying the Paris proposals. It was agreed after some discussion that the venue of this Conference should be Venice.

The belligerents themselves, however, had other views. Disgusted at the failure of the Powers, Greece was cogitating further efforts on her own, and in a Note handed to the Allies on July the 29th, announced her intention of occupying Constantinople, and followed up her announcement by landing 25,000 troops at Rodosto. She was at once warned by the British Government that, with Constantinople in the hands of the Allies, no such project could be approved, and she agreed to proceed no further with the plan in the absence of permission from the Allies to do so.

It was at this psychological moment, when the suspicions of the Turks as to the next move by Greece were thoroughly aroused, that Mr. Lloyd George's evil genius prompted him to make a speech which, in the circumstances of the time, could only be regarded by Greeks and Turks alike as an encouragement to the former to seek a decision by force. While he admitted that we were obliged, in the circumstances in which we were placed, to resist the desire of the Greeks to occupy Constantinople, he also admitted that, if not restrained, Greek troops would have little difficulty in seizing and holding the Turkish capital and by so doing in producing a decision. And he declared that it seemed a little unfair that we

should be defending the capital of their enemy against them. As it was, there was only one way in which the Greeks could obtain a decision, and that was by marching through impenetrable defiles for hundreds of miles into Turkish territory in Asia. He paid a glowing tribute to the prowess of Greek arms. They had established a military superiority, he declared, in every pitched battle and had only been deprived of victory by the conformation of the country and by the fact that they had been obliged to maintain lines of communication that no other army in Europe would ever have dreamed of risking. It was one of the unfairnesses of the situation that we were driven by the position we occupied into not giving them a fair field and no favour to fight the issue out. And then Mr. Lloyd George made an observation into which, it is easy to understand, both Greeks and Turks were almost certain to read a special significance—" Peace the Kemalists will not accept, because they say we will not give them satisfactory Armistice terms ; but we are not allowing the Greeks to wage the war with their full strength. We cannot allow that sort of thing to go on indefinitely in the hope that the Kemalists entertain that they will at last exhaust this little country, whose men have been in arms for ten or twelve years with one war after another, and which has not indefinite resources." [1]

Whatever may have been Mr. Lloyd George's object in making his speech, there is not the smallest doubt as to its effect. Both in Athens and in Angora it was interpreted as a thinly veiled invitation to Greece to renew the struggle. Passages from it were issued as an Army Order to the Greek forces. In the Council Chamber in Angora it led to a decision to risk an immediate offensive. On the night of August the 18th the Turkish army struck on a wide front and with complete success ; and before many days had passed the Greeks had been flung from the plateaux of Asia Minor and were streaming in panic and disorder across the Straits to Europe.

This rapid change in the situation brought a host of difficulties in its train. Across the waters of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles lay those strips of Asiatic soil which, in all the various proposals

[1] Speech in the House of Commons on August 4th, 1922.

made by the Allies for the settlement of the Near Eastern question, had figured as demilitarised and neutral zones. Unless the whole basis on which it was intended that the eventual settlement should rest, was to be upset, it was essential that these zones should remain intact. And, on September the 14th, after the flight of the Greeks from Asia, M. Poincaré agreed to representations in the names of the Allies being made to Mustapha Kemal to the effect that these zones must be respected by the Turkish troops.

In the meantime, from Constantinople, a stream of alarming telegrams poured in upon the Foreign office in London. It was reported that Mustapha Kemal had stated that it was his intention to settle not only the question of Smyrna, but of Thrace also, by force of arms. Rumour spoke of the vanguard of his army flushed with victory sweeping up from Smyrna and as having already reached the borders of the neutral zone. It was further stated that he was being urged by the more extreme elements in his entourage to provoke a rising in Constantinople and to incite to active insurrection the bands of military marauders which were in existence throughout Thrace. In short, all the news which poured in from the scene of action pointed to a determination on the part of a victorious Turkish army to fling back their hereditary foe and even the slender forces of the Allied Powers themselves, not from Asia only but from those lands in Europe—Constantinople, Gallipoli and Thrace—of which the vicissitudes of war had deprived the Turkish people.

This, then, was the situation at the middle of September. On the 15th, the Cabinet deliberated long and anxiously and decisions of grave importance were taken. Chanak on the Asiatic shore of the Dardanelles, occupied at the time by a single British battalion, was reinforced, and it was further decided that such forces, naval and military, as were available, should be concentrated upon preventing the violation of the neutral zone and the passage of Turkish troops from Asia to Europe. At the same time the Dominion Governments were informed of the critical nature of what was happening, and their co-operation, in the event of necessity, was invited. The Balkan States were similarly approached. In coming to their decisions the Cabinet not unnaturally assumed, in view of M. Poincaré's

Note of the 14th, that they were acting in conformity with the policy agreed upon by the Allies.

It is difficult to say how far Lord Curzon agreed with all the decisions arrived at by the Cabinet in the course of their proceedings on Friday the 15th. When judging his actions during this and the following days of stress, it is essential to bear in mind what has been said in chapter XV of his attitude in these days towards opposition on the part of his colleagues in the Cabinet. When telling of his successes in debate in those far-off days when he had dominated the Union, the Canning club and other political bodies at Oxford, I remarked that as often as not his triumphs were of a quasi-physical nature.[1] There were men in the Cabinet in 1922 of whom the same remark might not unjustly have been made; but Lord Curzon was not now one of them. On the contrary his vitality had been sapped by a long and exhausting illness. He entered the Cabinet room haltingly and sometimes in obvious pain. The foot-rest from which he never dared be parted was arranged for him under the Cabinet table. He took his seat slowly and often painfully. When strongly moved his hands would shuffle irritably with the papers in front of him; and from conflict, engendered by the vigorous expression of views with which he was unable to agree, he instinctively recoiled. That he was not wholly in sympathy with the majority, even on September the 15th, seems clear from a note in the form of a personal *aide-mémoire* which he wrote of the proceedings a short time afterwards. It was insisted, he noted, that British lives were about to be sacrificed, the British troops hurled into the Dardanelles, the freedom of the Straits lost for ever, Thrace overrun, Constantinople handed over to massacre. "I believe the bulk of this," he added, "to have been a gross and ridiculous exaggeration."

Nevertheless he must be held to have accepted the decisions taken, for he subsequently stated in public that after the meeting of the Cabinet he was engaged at the Foreign Office until past 8 p.m. in despatching the telegrams upon which the Cabinet had decided[2]. This task completed, he returned to Hackwood.

But, whatever may have been the position on Friday the 15th,

[1] See Volume I, chapter II.
[2] Statement by Lord Curzon in the *Morning Post* of November 10th, 1922.

it is clear from the happenings of the next few days that relations between Lord Curzon and some of his principal colleagues had now become gravely strained ; and that, even if he was not in serious disagreement with their policy, he did, in any case, dissent profoundly from the methods which they adopted in giving effect to it. On Saturday the 16th, certain Ministers met and, in face of the natural demand for information, decided to issue a statement. In the absence of Lord Curzon a *communiqué* was, therefore, drawn up by Mr. Churchill, submitted to the Prime Minister and handed to the Press. Neither Lord Curzon, who had been in telephonic communication with the Prime Minister during the day, nor the Foreign Office was consulted. And there is little doubt that, had the aid of either been invoked, the statement would have been couched in very different terms.

Be that as it may, the *communiqué* as issued, if its object was to awaken the world to a sense of the gravity of the situation which had arisen, was certainly successful. But the process of awakening affected different people in different ways. It created in the mind of the public the idea that the Government, or some members of the Government at any rate, were leading them to the brink of war and a simultaneous determination that in no circumstances would they follow them there. It infuriated Lord Curzon who read it in the Sunday papers " with consternation " and characterised it as a " manifesto " in essence and as " flamboyant " in style. And it immediately and fatally alienated Italy and France. At the meeting of the Cabinet on Monday the 18th he protested against the action of the Government in issuing it, and expressed his intention of at once proceeding to Paris to endeavour to restore the position with France, bluntly refusing the suggestion of the Prime Minister that he should take with him another Minister.

M. Paul Cambon, the veteran Ambassador of France, had once said of an interview which he had held with Lord Curzon when the relations between the two countries were seriously strained, that during the whole of his long service in England, amounting to twenty-two years, that half-hour had been the most painful and serious moment that he had had to face. It was now Lord Curzon's turn to experience feelings of the same sort. His conversations with

M. Poincaré, at first alone and later in conjunction with Count Sforza, were carried on in so highly charged an atmosphere that at one point he was unable to bear the strain of the French Premier's bitter reproaches, and demanded an adjournment in order that he might consider his position.

It had been an inauspicious prelude to this first discussion that, on the previous day, i.e., September the 19th, M. Poincaré should have telegraphed orders to Constantinople to withdraw the French contingent which, by arrangement between the Allied commanders on the spot, had proceeded to Chanak to support the British force already there. Here was France's answer to the "flamboyant Manifesto." In Lord Curzon's eyes such action was deplorable in itself, in that it left the small British force on the Asiatic shore of the Dardanelles isolated. It was even more deplorable as a gesture to the Turks, who could scarcely be expected to read into it anything else than an indication that on the question of the neutral zones France no longer supported the policy of Great Britain. And this was, indeed, the case; for, if the conversation of two and a half hours' duration between M. Poincaré and Lord Curzon, on the morning of September the 20th, did little else, it at least made one thing unmistakably clear, and that was that neither the French Prime Minister, nor his Government, nor the French Parliament would consent to any action by the Allied commanders on the spot which might expose a single French soldier to the danger of being shot at by a Turk. From this position M. Poincaré firmly declined to depart. He reaffirmed it in the presence and with the approval of the Italian representative later in the day; and he remarked that the best advice which he could give Lord Curzon was that his Government should follow the example set by France and withdraw their troops from Chanak, since he was satisfied that in a military sense the position was in any case untenable.

On the question of summoning an early Peace Conference Lord Curzon found little divergence between M. Poincaré and himself. The French Premier expressed his willingness to exert such influence as he might possess with Mustapha Kemal to dissuade him from embarking upon any course of action which might imperil the prospects of such a Conference, or which might compel Great

Britain to act alone. At the close of this second meeting on the 20th, Lord Curzon began to entertain hopes of a successful outcome of his mission. He was to pass through many hours of mental perturbation, however, before he could claim success. Conversations on the 22nd showed how difficult it was to exclude from the discussions frequent mention of the refusal of the French Government to co-operate in any military measures against the Turks. And before matters had proceeded far on that day, the Council room was resounding with charges and counter-charges, with recriminations, attacks and retorts, until Lord Curzon could stand the strain no longer and rising from his chair, shaken with emotion, left the room.

Later in the day some progress was made towards an accord, when Lord Curzon proposed that General Harington should proceed to Mudania to meet Mustapha Kemal, with a view to arranging for mutual recognition by Turks and Greeks of lines behind which each should halt in Asia and Europe respectively, pending the assembling of a Conference. Should M. Poincaré wish for time to consider this suggestion, Lord Curzon expressed his willingness to extend his stay in Paris for another twenty-four hours.

This marked the turning point in the negotiations, and, at the end of a four hours' sitting on the evening of the 23rd, agreement had been reached on the terms of an invitation to be sent to Mustapha Kemal's Government at Angora. Agreement once reached, little time was lost in acting upon it. The invitation was despatched to Angora the same night; Lord Curzon returned to London the following day, and on Monday the 25th was accorded the hearty congratulations of the Cabinet on his successful handling of his difficult mission. He was equally complimentary to those with whom only a short time before he had been so gravely incensed. "At no point," he said, "did the Prime Minister and his colleagues fail to give complete support, going even beyond what I had asked for. The trust and wide latitude given me have contributed materially towards the result of the Conference."

The decision to send a joint invitation to Angora was received with unfeigned relief by the French press, in which the part played by Lord Curzon in the negotiations was spoken of in terms of high appreciation. His long and patiently fought battle seemed, there-

fore, to have been crowned with a great reward; for the Alliance had been restored, while harmonious relations between Lord Curzon and his colleagues in the Cabinet had been re-established. Yet precisely at this moment Fate, looking on as it seemed with a sardonic grin at the complacency of his puppets, gave another and somewhat vicious jerk to the strings at the ends of which they danced. Immediately the scene changed. Confusion reigned where complacency had been. A revolution broke out in Greece. King Constantine displayed both a capacity for quick decision and discretion in hurrying from his recently recovered throne; and M. Venizelos hastened to London as the Envoy of the new Greek Government.

There is no doubt that this unlooked-for development gave new hope to the phil-Hellenes in the British Cabinet. They thought that under the inspiration of M. Venizelos a rapid Greek revival might be expected, and that in these altered circumstances a settlement on the lines of the Paris Pronouncement of the previous March might be achieved—a view which Lord Curzon was altogether unable to share. And he put his fears on record in a letter to Mr. Chamberlain:

> "I was very much alarmed at the idea put forward" (at a Cabinet meeting) "that we should once again seek the precarious and as I think worthless alliance of the Greeks, and very likely find ourselves once more at war with Turkey, with Greece alone on our side. Nothing in my opinion would reconcile the Country to such a development, and it would, I think, bring about the fall of the Government. It would also destroy at one blow the Allied unity which I was sent to Paris to endeavour to rebuild."[1]

Away in Asia Minor, Mustapha Kemal displayed an almost uncanny insight into the working of the British Prime Minister's mind. He apprehended that Mr. Lloyd George might already be negotiating with the new Greek Government with the idea of flinging them once more into the field of battle in the hope of

[1] Letter dated September 27th, 1922.

robbing Turkey of the spoils of victory. He therefore left Smyrna, whither he had earlier summoned his Government, and in the company of M. Franklin-Bouillon, who had appeared upon the scene once more, retired to Angora. He refrained from making any answer to the Allied invitation, and instead, permitted his troops to advance across the border of the neutral zone until they bivouacked so close to the slender British garrison at Chanak that they even made grimaces at the British soldiers across the narrow strip of barbed wire entanglement which was all that now separated them.

Lord Curzon was no more willing to tolerate this contemptuous attitude on the part of Mustapha Kemal than were other members of the Cabinet; but he still believed that the situation could be dealt with by diplomacy without resort to force. And it was on this question that a difference in the Cabinet broke out once more. On September the 29th a conference of Ministers decided, much against Lord Curzon's will, to despatch immediately to Sir Charles Harington an ultimatum for communication to the Turkish commander. On the same afternoon Lord Curzon saw Dr. Nihad Rechad, the Kemalist representative in London; and, having explained to him that, owing to the attitude of Mustapha Kemal, a situation had arisen in which nothing short of the immediate withdrawal of the Turkish forces from the neighbourhood of Chanak could avert an outbreak of hostilities, urged him to telegraph in this sense without one moment's delay. And, having thus set the diplomatic machine in motion, he asked that a further meeting of the inner Cabinet might be held at his house that night, to plead for a delay of at least twenty-four hours in the presentation of the ultimatum. Those members who had remained in London—the Prime Minister had gone to the country—assembled at Carlton House Terrace at 10 p.m. But expert military opinion, which was to the effect that only by prompt military action could the danger of a military disaster be averted, prevailed, and Lord Curzon's appeal was rejected.

For the next two days the Conference of Ministers was in almost perpetual session, in the expectation of news from General Harington that the ultimatum had been delivered and hostilities begun. No news came and on Saturday, September the 30th, while a reply from

Constantinople was still being awaited, Lord Curzon sat down and wrote an account of all that he had been going through to Lady Curzon—

> " I have had a most terrible time since you left. On Friday evening I had a long talk with the Kemalist representative here. This was followed by a meeting at this house (No. 1 Carlton House Terrace) of Cabinet Ministers, 10 p.m. to 11.45 p.m. Yesterday there were three Cabinet meetings from the last of which I only returned at 12.40 a.m. I then did not have one wink of sleep. We began again at 10 a.m. and I have only just returned at 2.25 p.m. There is another at 3 p.m. I have had to sustain the battle single-handed against all the fire-eaters and war-mongers. . . It is a Homeric encounter. But, so far, nothing has happened as they predicted and I hope there is still a possibility of keeping peace, though if left to themselves they would wreck it twice a day."

That same night at a further meeting of the Cabinet, at which great irritation was exhibited by some of those present at the continued silence of General Harington, the breach between those who urged an immediate resort to action and those headed by Lord Curzon who counselled patience, developed rapidly. Those who thought that the extreme limit of patience had been reached and, indeed, passed, urged the abandonment of the Mudania Conference, which had been the corner-stone of the agreement which Lord Curzon had so recently succeeded in re-establishing with France. This proposal was fortunately not insisted on, and Lord Curzon was congratulated by those who now gave him their support upon the outcome of the meeting :

> " I must congratulate you most heartily," wrote one of them on October the 2nd, " that your views prevailed in Cabinet and that the Mudania Conference is to take place before we open fire ! It is difficult for those of us who have not been attending the conferences of Ministers to pick up all the threads of all that has gone before at a moment's notice ; but I was

simply horrified at the proposals made by certain of our colleagues to issue an ultimatum at once, and not even to wait for Harington's telegram which was known to be on the way. Happily, this proposal was not persisted in on Saturday night; but if it had been, I should certainly have supported your view and so would several others who sit at our end of the table. And yesterday things went alright in view of the telegram which had been received."[1]

General Harington had, in fact, refrained from acting on the ultimatum despatched to him on the 29th, and peace had consequently remained unbroken.

[1]Letter from Sir A. Griffith-Boscawen.

CHAPTER XIX

THE FALL OF THE COALITION GOVERNMENT

1922

ALTHOUGH the receipt of General Harington's telegram on October the 1st had eased the tension of the situation, the breach in the Cabinet remained. Among some, at least, of the Conservative members there was genuine alarm, and in his letter of October the 2nd, Sir Arthur Griffith-Boscawen spoke for others besides himself:

> "I am greatly alarmed at the situation generally, the terrible risks of war which some of our friends appear prepared to take and their distrust of diplomatic methods. . . I am certain the country does not want war and will not have it, unless it is convinced that every effort to avoid it has been made."

And neither Sir Arthur Griffith-Boscawen, nor Mr. Stanley Baldwin nor others who shared their views, were prepared to acquiesce in action by the Cabinet which they thought might bring about a rupture. They, therefore, approached Lord Curzon with a request that they might meet together at his house to discuss their action as occasion might require, and they gave him definite assurances that from this time onwards they were prepared to associate themselves with him and to join him in resigning if the necessity arose. And it was from the feverish happenings of this troubled week-end that Lord Curzon himself dated the first definite appearance of the crack which in the end split the Coalition Govern-

ment asunder. " When a group of Cabinet Ministers begin to meet separately and to discuss independent action," he jotted down on a sheet of paper, " the death tick is audible in the rafters."

A good deal was to happen, however, before the final crash came. Mr. Lloyd George's resignation did not take place until October the 19th, and before that date the situation underwent constant change.

At Mudania where, in accordance with the Paris decision, the Generals in command of the Allied forces were in conference with a view to determining lines behind which the troops of the belligerents should be withdrawn, an agreement, known as the Convention of Mudania, had been arrived at and had been handed to the Turks. The latter had thereupon raised a number of important issues lying altogether beyond the scope of the negotiations with which the Generals had been entrusted. Among other things they had demanded that there should at once be handed over to them that part of Eastern Thrace from which it had been agreed under the terms of the Convention that the Greek forces should withdraw, thus prejudging one of the major issues with which the impending Peace Conference would be concerned.

Instead of joining General Harington in refusing to consider any such demand, General Charpy, acting upon authority transmitted to him from Paris, had declared his agreement with all the requests put forward by the Turks. And, encouraged by this support, Ismet Pasha had announced on behalf of the Government at Angora that, unless the demands were immediately conceded, he would at 2 p.m. on October the 6th, set the Turkish Army in motion. General Harington had thereupon left Mudania for Constantinople. And, with the unity of the Allies sundered once more by conflicting aims and divided counsels, there arose before Lord Curzon's troubled eyes, limned in flaming outline against the storm-wracked sky of Eastern Europe, the now familiar vision of " the horse that was red " to whose rider had been given, on the opening of the second seal of the book, a great sword and power to take peace from the earth.

Nothing short of an immediate restoration of the Allied front seemed likely to save the situation, and for the second time within a

fortnight Lord Curzon hurried to Paris. So urgent did the matter seem to him to be that, late though the hour was, he persuaded M. Poincaré to confer with him immediately after his arrival; and from 11 p.m. on October the 6th until 3 a.m. on the 7th he argued the case with the French Premier and with Signor Galli who attended on behalf of Italy. It was not until far into the night that the discovery was made that M. Poincaré was not in possession of the full demands which the Turks had put forward—demands which General Charpy, acting upon the general authorisation which M. Poincaré had given him to assume any attitude towards Turkey which he might deem necessary to avoid a rupture, had announced his intention of accepting. From the moment that this discovery was made, the whole tone of the discussion changed and the hope of agreement dawned. At the conclusion of two more sittings on the 7th, a formula embodying a compromise on the question of the proposed Turkish occupation of Eastern Thrace was arrived at, all other demands being rejected.

It was agreed in short that, on the withdrawal of the Greek forces behind the line of the Maritza, Eastern Thrace should for a period of one month be occupied by the Allies; that this period should be taken advantage of to set up a Turkish civil administration with a limited number of gendarmerie for the purpose of maintaining order; and that at the end of the month the Allied troops should be withdrawn, except from certain points on the right bank of the river, to the positions which they occupied at the time of the Mudania Conference. Agreement having thus been reached, General Charpy was instructed by M. Poincaré to press this decision upon the Turkish representative at Mudania.

Lord Curzon returned to London on Sunday the 8th, elated at the successful outcome of his difficult mission. For the second time within a few days, he was acclaimed in the Press as the man who had saved the country from war and re-established the solidarity of the Alliance. And the volume of praise with which his return was greeted was not confined to the Press, for at the conclusion of his report to the Cabinet on the afternoon of Monday the 9th, a formal expression of appreciation of the important services rendered by him in Paris was once more placed on record.

It was not only with these troubles in the arena of international affairs, however, that Ministers were preoccupied at this time. For some days past the desirability of an early dissolution had been discussed by leading members of the Government. The revolt in the ranks of the Conservative party against the leadership of Mr. Lloyd George which had disclosed itself at the beginning of the year had not been extinguished. If the fire had died down after the action of Sir George Younger, to which reference has been made in the previous chapter, the feelings of dissatisfaction with which it had been fed still smouldered, and might break into flame at any moment. A meeting of the National Union of Conservative Associations had been called for November the 13th; and it was to consider whether it would be fair to the Conservative party to bring on a General Election before that date that Mr. Winston Churchill invited the Prime Minister and leading Unionist members of the Cabinet, including Lord Curzon, to dinner at his house. That Lord Curzon's relations with the Prime Minister and others of his colleagues in the Cabinet were strained must be clear from the narrative of events which has been given. On the other hand, with his highly-strung emotional temperament, he was not proof against the subtle flattery implied by the formal recognition of his achievements by the Cabinet in connection with his Paris negotiations; and by the end of the evening a decision had been reached, with which Lord Curzon had expressed his concurrence, in favour of an appeal to the country before November the 13th.

How, then, is his subsequent action to be explained? To anyone who has followed the story of George Curzon's life as I have traced it through its various crises, the explanation should not be difficult to find. The case is one which is on an exact par with that of the Constitutional crisis of 1911 and of the Woman Suffrage difficulty of 1918—a decision arrived at on the impulse of the moment, followed on reflection by a realisation that the decision was not in accord with his real feelings on the matter at issue, and an eleventh hour determination to reverse it. Moreover, everything that happened after this first dinner at Mr. Churchill's house—there was to be a second as will appear hereafter—combined to bring home to Lord Curzon a conviction that in consenting to an immediate

dissolution with a view to an appeal by the Coalition for a fresh lease of power, he had been wrong.

Following upon the dinner party at Mr. Churchill's house, a meeting of the Conservative members of the Cabinet was held at 11 Downing Street at Mr. Chamberlain's invitation on Thursday, October the 12th. The feeling of discontent which was prevalent amongst the rank and file of the party was forcibly expressed by more than one of those present, and notably by Mr. Stanley Baldwin. Lord Curzon himself submitted arguments against an immediate General Election, pointing out that, as a result of the re-establishment of the Allied front, preparations were now actively in progress for the impending Peace Conference; and that the British case would be seriously impaired if, as the result of an Election, the threads of exceedingly complicated and difficult negotiations had to be picked up on the very threshold of the Conference Chamber by a new Foreign Minister. He added that, even supposing an Election resulted in no change in the personnel of the British delegation, the dislocation, inevitable with a General Election in full swing, would prejudice the progress of the preparations which were in hand and would necessitate some postponement of the Conference which M. Poincaré was anxious to see summoned at the earliest possible date. The meeting broke up without any decision being come to.

It was not long, however, before further information reached him to the effect that feeling amongst Conservatives generally was so strongly against an immediate dissolution, which was regarded as a trick to snatch a verdict in favour of a continuance of the Coalition behind their backs, that it had been decided to summon an emergency meeting of the National Union in order to forestall the anticipated action of the Cabinet. And it was while in a state of considerable mental perturbation as a result of these things that he found himself brought into sharp collision with Mr. Lloyd George once more.

On the morning of Friday the 13th, a little group of Ministers including Lord Curzon were talking in the Cabinet room at the conclusion of a conference, when the Prime Minister came in fresh from an interview with the King. From a written account of these events kept by Lord Curzon it appears that Mr. Lloyd George was in

"the highest spirits and the most bellicose mood." In a few boisterous sentences he indicated to those present some of the things that he intended to say in his speech at Manchester the following day, including a graphic reference to atrocities perpetrated by the Turks. For obvious reasons Lord Curzon begged him to avoid all reference to this subject. Mr. Lloyd George was not to be restrained. And on the following Sunday morning Lord Curzon read his speech with stupefaction and dismay.

It is easy to understand Lord Curzon's feelings. On the eve of the Conference at which he, as Foreign Minister of Great Britain, would be charged with the duty of making peace with a victorious Turkish army and an exultant Turkish nation, the Prime Minister of Great Britain had based his entire defence of the recent policy of Great Britain upon a desire to save Constantinople and Thrace from the bloody shambles of a Turkish massacre. And not only had he held up the Turks to execration as the perpetrators of barbarous excesses, but he had publicly derided France for having been false to her pledged word. Finally, Lord Curzon's resentment against the Prime Minister on the score of his interference with the conduct by the Foreign Office of the Foreign Policy of the Government, was suddenly reignited by information, which reached him on the very day on which Mr. Lloyd George was speaking at Manchester, of a series of communications between an Italian Envoy and the Prime Minister's private secretariat on the subject of the attitude to be adopted by the Italian delegate at the Peace Conference, in the course of which the bases of a possible bargain between Italy and Great Britain were tentatively put forward.

Only a few days before, in a letter addressed to the Prime Minister on October the 2nd, Lord Curzon had protested against such conversations between the Envoys of Foreign Governments and the Prime Minister, without the knowledge of the Foreign Secretary, even when the substance of the conversation was subsequently reported:

> "I have just been reading the acount of your talk with M. Diamandy. I hope you will not mind my saying that I think that the Foreign Secretary should have had a chance of

being present, and that if, as you foreshadow, the conversation is renewed, you will give me that opportunity. The Foreign Office is placed in a very invidious position if these Envoys are given access to the Prime Minister without the Foreign Office knowing anything about it. I am quite ready to admit that you state the case far better than we should. But if the Rumanian Government desires to express its views to the British Government, either it should do so through the ordinary channel, or, if you honour it by seeing the Envoy, then we should, I submit, be given the chance of being represented. I am sure that you will not resent the frankness with which I have spoken."

And, following upon his letter to Mr. Lloyd George on the subject of his conversation with the Rumanian Envoy, Lord Curzon had drafted, on the eve of his second journey to Paris, a longer and more detailed letter of protest which he had intended, after first submitting it to Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Balfour for their opinion, to despatch to the Prime Minister preparatory to asking for an interview to discuss the position. The letter was actually submitted to Mr. Chamberlain, who returned it with the suggestion that before sending it Lord Curzon should discuss it with Lord Balfour. The letter was, in fact, never sent because, as has been explained in an earlier chapter, before he had found an opportunity of discussing it with Lord Balfour, the crash came and Mr. Lloyd George's Government fell. The letter is, however, of interest, because it explains Lord Curzon's state of mind at a time when he was being called upon to decide whether he could continue his support of the Coalition with Mr. Lloyd George at its head, or whether he should definitely sever his connection with it. The draft is dated October the 5th and runs as follows :

" My dear Prime Minister,

I wrote to you two days ago about your personal talk with M. Diamandy, the Rumanian Envoy."

Then follows a statement with regard to other instances of communications which had taken place between the Prime Minister and

the representatives of Foreign Governments, the gist of which seemed to Lord Curzon to run counter to the policy being pursued by the Foreign Office, after which the draft proceeds :

" Thus there has grown up a system under which there are in reality two Foreign Offices: the one for which I am for the time being responsible, and the other at Number 10—with the essential difference between them that, whereas I report not only to you but to all my colleagues everything that I say or do, every telegram that I receive or send, every communication of importance that reaches me, it is often only by accident that I hear what is being done by the other Foreign Office ; and even when I am informed officially of what has passed there, it has nevertheless been done, in many cases, without the Foreign Office, for which I am responsible, knowing that the communication was going to be made or the interview take place.

" This condition of affairs has reached such a pitch that not only is it a subject of common knowledge and daily comment in my office, but it is known to every journalist in London, and it has been the subject of open complaints and censure in well-nigh every newspaper in the United Kingdom, the Foreign Office and myself in particular having been held up to contempt for having abdicated our functions, or allowed them to be stolen away. There cannot be a doubt that public opinion has not merely condemned this procedure as unconstitutional and improper, but has clamoured without a dissentient voice for its cessation. In this way there has grown up a situation which has for long rendered my own position one of extreme delicacy and difficulty, and to which, in the common interest, an end should be sought.

" During this period—I have now been Secretary of State for three years, and I was acting for the best part of a year before—I have borne this situation with such equanimity as I could. I have on several occasions mentioned it or written about it to you. I have repeatedly mentioned it to your Private Secretaries. I have discussed it at length with my principal colleagues. Throughout I have gladly recognised the exceptional

and commanding influence which you exercise over the Foreign Affairs both of this country and of the world, by virtue of your personality and of the power which your unexampled experience in Conferences and Councils during and since the war has very naturally placed in your hands ; and I have constantly deferred from making more serious representations in the interests of loyalty to yourself and unity in the Government.

" But the case has not been confined even to a long series of such minor incidents as those to which I have referred at the beginning of this letter. I could, if required, draw up a list of important cases in which agents have been employed, instructions given, policies initiated at Number 10 Downing Street—all in the Department of Foreign Affairs—of which the Foreign Office has either known nothing or has been informed only when the action had already been taken.

" I have for long felt that such a situation should not be permitted to continue, and that, if it were not checked, you ought to have a Foreign Secretary who will more easily than I conform to this novel conception of Foreign Office duties. Indeed, I should find no pleasure in continuing now, were I not to receive a definite assurance from you that the constitutional relations between the two Departments should be re-established and the Foreign Office shall resume its proper function in the State.

" Pray believe me that this resolve on my part indicates no desire to question the prerogative or the paramount influence of the Prime Minister in general or of yourself in particular. These are undisputed and indisputable, and, with due co-ordination, can be wielded as effectively in the domain of Foreign Affairs as in every other Department of Government.

" I have discussed this matter at length with Chamberlain and at earlier dates with Balfour ; and I shall be ready to come with the former and see you upon it at any time which you may desire. I could also, if it were found necessary, draw up the fuller statement, for which I have the materials."

The state of affairs depicted in this draft had, as Lord Curzon

remarked, become a matter of public notoriety and had even been exciting a steadily increasing volume of hostile comment. And when Lord Gladstone declared, in the course of a speech at Manchester on October the 3rd, that in the last few years we had developed two Foreign Offices, one on the south side of Downing Street and the other on the north, the latter being in the Prime Minister's garden, he was only voicing a widely prevalent opinion. Speaking at Dumfries three days later, Mr. Asquith had commented with similar outspokenness upon "the substitution for our old and well tried constitutional procedure of the improvisations of an intermittent and incalculable dictatorship." And with special reference to the conduct of Foreign Affairs he had said—

> "You have had during these last few years in the same sphere of administration two authorities speaking with different voices, often pursuing discrepant and irreconcilable policies, often with the result that the one that knows less in the long run supersedes and overrides the one that knows more."

It was the cumulative effect of all these things, then, that brought about the change in Lord Curzon's attitude which was subsequently characterised by Mr. Churchill as "sudden and nimble," but which Lord Curzon himself described as "slow and perhaps even belated."[1]

During the opening days of October the agitation in the ranks of the Conservative party had become a factor which it was impossible to ignore, and those who had agreed to an immediate dissolution were invited by Mr. Churchill to a second dinner at his house on Sunday, October the 15th, to consider the position in light of it. But by October the 15th Mr. Lloyd George had made his speech at Manchester, and news of his communications with the Italian Envoy had reached Lord Curzon, and on the 15th, therefore, his mind was finally made up. He could no longer agree to an immediate appeal to the country in which the Coalition including himself were to appear before the electors as "a happy and united party." Nor, in these circumstances, did he feel able to attend the dinner party at

[1] In the *Morning Post* of November 10th, 1922.

Mr. Churchill's house that night. Those with whom he had been acting must be informed of his change of view and of the reasons for it, and to this end he asked Mr. Chamberlain as leader of the Unionist party to see him in the course of the afternoon. Having told him of the attitude which he now felt bound to take up, he then wrote to Mr. Churchill excusing himself from attending the party in the evening and adding that Mr. Chamberlain was in possession of the reasons for his altered point of view and would explain them to the gathering.

Four more days were to elapse before the final *dénouement*. And though Lord Curzon was, of course, invited to no further conferences of the Coalition leaders, he found them packed with incident. On Monday the 16th, he saw Mr. Chamberlain and learned that at the dinner on the previous night it had been decided to call a meeting of Unionist members of the House of Commons to be held at the Carlton Club on Thursday the 19th. At the meeting a programme was to be submitted and an expression of confidence in Mr. Chamberlain's leadership invited.

On Tuesday the 17th he went at the Prime Minister's request to see him; and now at last he found the opportunity which he had long sought of placing before him in detail the grounds of his dissatisfaction. For an hour and twenty minutes these two men faced each other—the one determined to bring to an end a state of affairs which had become intolerable; the other employing every art, and displaying an agility which extorted unwilling admiration, in turning the attack levelled against him. Since no third person was present to take a note of all that passed, no detailed account of this moving interview can be given. But it is, perhaps, permissible to make public Lord Curzon's own written account of the last few minutes of it:

> "In moving sentences and in a voice charged with emotion he (the Prime Minister) asked me not to forget the great scenes in which we had jointly taken part and the common comradeship of the war, and thanked me for the loyalty which I had consistently shown both in speech and action to him. I could not, or at least I did not, question the sincerity of these

utterances, sharply as they contrasted with the treatment I had so often received at his hands. They enabled us to part in the most friendly fashion. I said that he was aware that my resignation was in his hands and that he could act upon it when he chose, to which he replied with unconscious gift of prophecy—'as I shall probably be resigning myself on Thursday we had better postpone a decision till then.'"[1]

Wednesday, October the 18th, was not to pass without adding a contribution of its own to the sensations of these eventful days. In the morning Lord Curzon saw Mr. Bonar Law. He found him depressed and worried by the appeals which were being made to him to thrust himself once more into the forefront of public life. He had now been free for the past eighteen months from the almost intolerable strain of office, and he shrank from the prospect of resuming a burden which he had found all too heavy to bear. From many quarters he had received assurances that, if he came out at the Carlton Club meeting with a definite appeal to the party to sever their connection with the Coalition, he would receive sufficient support to enable him to carry the day. But that, as he pointed out to Lord Curzon, would almost necessarily impose upon him the duty of forming a Government himself—and for such a task he had no appetite. So distasteful was the prospect, that Lord Curzon left him thinking seriously of resigning his seat in the House of Commons and retiring finally from public life.

Upon what small vicissitudes do great events revolve! I do not pretend to know what happened during the next few hours to turn the scale. And the only comment that I can usefully make is that, contrary, perhaps, to the generally accepted view, Mr. Bonar Law was an extremely ambitious man. This, however, is surmise. All that is certain is that the scale turned. Later in the day Lord Curzon saw him again, and has left on record an account of this second meeting—

"In the evening when I saw him again all had changed. His mind had been made up. He had resolved or been per-

[1] From a personal *aide-mémoire* written by Lord Curzon some time in October 1922.

suaded to assume the lead, and he even gave me the substance of the speech which he proposed to make on the morrow. We discussed whether I ought to be present or not. In any case I said I would not speak against my colleagues and should insist on maintaining silence. But when he declared that this would be impossible, and that I could not escape being called upon, I decided with his concurrence that out of loyalty to Chamberlain I had better stay away, and that I should excuse myself on the very legitimate ground—about which I felt strongly—that as Leader of the House of Lords I had no business to appear at, or to address, a meeting from which the peers had been excluded and which was confined—except for Ministers—to the House of Commons. No peers had been invited to the Carlton Club meeting of Unionist M.P.s which had elected Chamberlain Leader of the party, and none, in my view, had any right to be present at a meeting which would either confirm or revoke that choice."

The meeting duly took place at the Carlton Club on the morning of Thursday, October the 19th. Mr. Bonar Law's intervention was, undoubtedly, the decisive factor; and from the moment that he declared—on Mr. Chamberlain refusing to defer a decision until after the meeting of the National Union—that in that case he attached more importance to preserving the unity of the party than to winning the next Election, the doom of the Coalition was sealed.

On receipt of news of the decision of the Carlton Club meeting Mr. Lloyd George resigned; Mr. Bonar Law was summoned to Buckingham Palace; and, later the same day, he called on Lord Curzon and invited him to remain at the Foreign Office and to render him such aid as lay in his power in forming an Administration.

Thus came to an end the Coalition Government. Mr. Bonar Law was elected Leader of the Unionist party in Mr. Chamberlain's place; the dissolution of Parliament took place on October the 26th; the General Election followed; and, as a result of the polling which was held on November the 15th, 344 officially recognised Unionists were returned giving Mr. Bonar Law a majority of 73 over all other parties combined.

CHAPTER XX

THE CONFERENCE OF LAUSANNE

1922-1923

THROUGHOUT the series of events recorded in the preceding chapter preparations for the Peace Conference went steadily forward. On Wednesday, October the 18th, the day before the fateful meeting at the Carlton Club, Lord Curzon was busy with the draft of a long letter to M. Poincaré in which he put forward his proposals on the subject. At his suggestion, and with the cordial assent of the Swiss Government, Lausanne was agreed to as the seat of the Conference. Some delay in its assembling was inevitable in view of the domestic crisis in England, and the date suggested by M. Poincaré, namely, October the 30th, was changed first to November the 13th and ultimately to November the 20th.

On one matter Lord Curzon insisted, viz., that, before the meeting of the delegates at Lausanne, a definite agreement should be come to between Great Britain and France, and if possible Italy also, on the main provisions of the Treaty which they proposed to negotiate. He could not contemplate with equanimity the possibility of any serious disagreement between the principal Allies at the Conference table and in the face of Turkey and all Europe. Indeed he stated quite frankly that, in the absence of such an understanding, he was not prepared to enter the Conference at all.

A meeting was accordingly arranged, and on November the 18th he discussed all the more important points with M. Poincaré in Paris. The conversation was cordial in tone and resulted in a large measure of agreement; even if events were to prove that the statement in the official *communiqué* that it had "fully confirmed the

complete accord between the Allies in all the matters to be discussed," was unduly optimistic. Lord Curzon's personal estimate of the value of the interchange of views was a rather less sanguine one —" Poincaré, for him, was amiable. But his mind is formal, disputatious and precise, and I can hardly say that I found the warm and enthusiastic concord which he had promised."[1] Moreover he had yet to learn what attitude the new Italian Prime Minister, Signor Mussolini, intended to take up. " Soon we shall enter Swiss territory," he wrote from the special train in which he and M. Poincaré and the French delegates, M. Barrère—" for twenty-five years French Ambassador at Rome and a man of intelligence and power " —and M. Bompard were travelling. " But whether we are to meet Mussolini at Lausanne or are to continue by train or motor to Territet to meet his convenience I do not yet know. . . Anyhow there seems to be ahead another long agitated night with the whole discussion over again."[2] At Territet that evening the ground was once more traversed by the plenipotentiaries of the three principal Allies and an announcement of their agreement issued. The stage was thus set for what all devoutly hoped might be the final scene in the moving drama which had opened in the streets of Serajevo more than eight years before. At the first Public Session of the Conference, held at the Casino de Montbenon at 3.30 p.m. on November the 20th, this hope was eloquently voiced by M. Haab, President of the Swiss Confederation, in the course of his welcome to the delegates :

> " The whole world turns towards the shores of the Leman an anxious gaze in which, nevertheless, there shines a strong gleam of hope. All hearts are beating in harmony, animated by the same desire—to see your sagacity succeed in giving peace and quietude to the belligerent States, and thence to all humanity, which will thus be able to take up again its onward march towards the conquest of intellectual and economic prosperity."

There is no necessity to tell here in any detail the story of the proceedings of the Conference which dragged on for eleven weary

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon, dated November 19th, 1922. [2] *Ibid.*

weeks. A full account of them was laid before Parliament and is easily accessible, consequently, to anyone desiring to acquaint himself with the long and laborious discussions which took place on every proposal put forward by the Allies. As chairman of the chief of the three Commissions to which the work of the Conference was entrusted—that on Territorial and Military questions—Lord Curzon found himself burdened with an onerous and responsible task. And it is to paint a picture of him in the part of lead in this intensely complicated drama, rather than to write the record of an historic episode, that I am primarily concerned. No estimate of his achievement is, however, possible unless the peculiar conditions under which the Treaty of Lausanne was negotiated, are understood. And a few words of explanation on the point may not be out of place.

Hitherto, the Treaties of Peace arising out of the world war had not strictly speaking been negotiated at all. They had been drawn up by the victors and imposed upon the vanquished. Only when the terms had been decided on, as Lord Curzon subsequently reminded the members of the Imperial Conference in October 1923, was the beaten enemy admitted to be told his sentence and to make the conventional protest of the doomed man. At Lausanne all was different. Here the Turks sat at the table on a footing of equality with all the other Powers. It was no longer a case of dictating terms to a defeated foe; it was a case of arriving at agreement by argument, persuasion and compromise. In Ismet Pasha and his colleagues the Allies met the representatives of a nation elated with recent victories, confident in the prowess of their army, convinced by recent experience that they had only to threaten a further resort to force to break up the unity of the Powers arrayed against them and determined, therefore, to fight every clause of the Treaty submitted to them. Even before the Conference had assembled the victorious Kemalists had stretched out their hands to grasp the spoils. The naval and military forces of the Allies had been requested to leave Constantinople; contrary to the provisions of the Mudania Convention the Angora Turks had started taking over the government of the city and had virtually deposed the Sultan who, realising that he had become little more than a passenger on a sinking ship, had

incontinently fled for safety to the welcome refuge provided by a British man-of-war. " Millerand," wrote Lord Curzon on November the 19th, on his way from Paris to Lausanne, " was as usual very frank and pleasant, and we conversed for half an hour. He was rather disturbed at our having taken off the Sultan and appeared to see in this a deep and subtle plot. I was able to reassure him about this since the first I had heard about it was from the newspapers." [1] Moreover as the negotiations proceeded it became clear that, despite the efforts which Lord Curzon had made to ensure the solidarity of the Allied front by previous consultation, there were points on which divergences existed. All of which helps to explain why the Treaty, which was at last signed on July the 24th, 1923, was not such a Treaty as could have been concluded in 1919, nor such a Treaty as was actually signed, though never ratified, in August 1920.

On November the 21st M. Poincaré left Lausanne after committing the interests of France to M. Barrère and M. Bompard ; and the Conference settled down to steady work. No one knew better than Lord Curzon the nature of the task that lay before him. " I believe I was thought to have done well at the Conference to-day," he wrote on November the 21st, "showing the Turks, who were very irritating, a mixture of courtesy and firmness. It will be a long and desperate struggle."

He was, indeed, by far the most considerable figure at the Conference. Public recognition of his success at Paris when war was hanging in the balance, six weeks before, had greatly gratified him. And with indications that the Press were ready enough, if he would allow them, to do justice to his handling of a first-class and admittedly thorny international problem, he expanded visibly. The journalists of all nations gathered at Lausanne were quick to note the change. It was said of him that he had given up his taciturnity and his moody solitudes ; that he shone in conversation with all and sundry and that he invited appreciative journalists to lunch. Within a very few days he had won the respect and admiration of the delegates. Those who had come prepared to criticise remained to praise. They remarked with delight the grand manner of earlier and more spacious days, yet combined with it an indefatigable courtesy which

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon.

prompted him to help forward every delegate, less amply equipped than he himself, along the path of the discussion. "But," as an observant onlooker noticed, "it must be along the path. Digression, so dear to the naturally eloquent in all continents, is stayed with a smile or a tactful reflection. Is the speaker in need of a name, a figure or a date? As likely as not, a murmur from the chair gives him the correct information—though not, it seems, always that which the speaker was relying on for his argument."[1] His own extraordinarily detailed and comprehensive knowledge of every subject that came under discussion was, indeed, a matter of astonished and widespread comment. Lord Curzon himself spoke modestly of the advantage which he found it. "I think such success as I am thought to have," he told Lady Curzon in a letter written on November the 23rd, "arises from the fact that I know my case pretty well and that somehow or other I have the art of getting on with Orientals."

The extent of the praise which was showered upon him both surprised and pleased him. "We are getting on with the Conference rather better than I expected," he wrote on November the 23rd, "and it is with the surprise of absolute novelty that I find myself everywhere praised (after the English pressmen's view of me) for conciliation, courtesy and tact!" He was depicted to the world as he had seldom been; for, since he had shed the "grand manner" in his intercourse with them, the portrait which those whose duty it was to inform the public of the progress of events at Lausanne were able to draw, was a more faithful likeness of the man than the caricature to which the world had become accustomed:

> "I wonder if you have read the wonderful tributes to me in the English newspapers, *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, *Evening Standard* and many others? I have suddenly been discovered at the age of 63. I was discovered when I was Viceroy of India from 39 to 46. Then I was forgotten, traduced, buried, ignored. Now I have been dug up, and people seem to find life and even merit in the corpse."[2]

[1] Mr. Perceval Landon in the *Daily Telegraph* of November 27th, 1922.
[2] Letter to Lady Curzon, dated November 28th, 1922.

Yet even now, the public did not obtain a complete portrait of this extraordinarily complex man. The little daily trials in connection not with great things but with small—things which if generally known would have done so much to present him as a being *in pari materia* with themselves—remained hidden from the world at large. The hazy idea of him as a sort of glorified Grand Panjandrum, sheltered in some mysterious way from the common experiences of the ordinary man, persisted. Yet, throughout his life, Lord Curzon seemed fated to be in special degree the victim of irritating if trivial domestic worries. And the fact that he was for the most part himself the author of his troubles did nothing to lessen the vexation which they caused him. No one who served him, in however humble a capacity, was ever permitted to perform his or her task in peace. Always Lord Curzon wanted it done differently. " I really think," he once wrote of one of his servants, " that the little housekeeper though quite willing is not at all competent. She has put the wrong covers on the wrong chairs everywhere. My own chair has gone and I am sitting on one of the little straight-backed green chairs—most uncomfortable." It was to no international crisis but to a comparatively trivial domestic mishap of a similar nature that he was referring when he told Lady Curzon, one day in October 1920, that even in her house of sickness she seemed to him to be in a haven of peace compared with " the world of storm and trouble and worry " in the midst of which he moved.

From his attitude towards his household it necessarily followed not only that he burdened himself, as has been pointed out repeatedly in these volumes, with an immense amount of wholly unnecessary labour, but that he found unusual difficulty in finding servants to suit him. " I am just going to put away your snuff boxes, etc.," he told Lady Curzon one day in March 1920, " before going down to tackle Berthelot about Palestine."

A new valet had been engaged just before he started for Lausanne; but the venture was no more successful than many others. " —— is a perfectly useless valet," he wrote the day he reached Lausanne. " I don't suppose he has ever valeted anyone in his life. He cannot pack ; forgets everything (left my foot-rest behind this morning) and is never there when wanted." Before a week had passed, one more

failure in the long series of attempts to secure a servant to suit him had to be recorded—" Having no valet I now have to dress myself." The reason was set forth in a letter written on November the 28th—" I have had the usual misadventure with my valet. He was blind drunk both yesterday night and to-night and was found dancing downstairs with the lady visitors. I dismiss him to-morrow and must do without." [1]

And though the greater accessibility which he displayed at Lausanne resulted in a truer picture of him being given to the public, it was to very few that he ever lifted the blind that was habitually drawn down upon the innermost places of his being. Those who, day after day, watched him at close quarters, may have suspected something, though they can hardly have guessed the extent, of the physical disabilities with which he had constantly to cope. " My broken ' cage ' gives me great trouble," he wrote, referring to the steel support which in these days he always had to wear ; " and yet I cannot afford to send it home for repair, for I should be without a support for a whole week." [2] They saw nothing of the constant inner struggle—hope alternating with fear, exhilaration with depression. Yet his mind, for all his outward calm, tossed feverishly on a sea of tempestuous emotion.

> " To-day we came to grips with the Turks. They were exceptionally rude and dilatory. So after they had made the most impossible demands I made a speech on behalf of the three great Powers, saying that we absolutely refused the points for which they were pressing and declined to give way. What will happen I do not know. Perhaps we shall learn to-morrow." [3]

These difficulties induced gloomy foreboding. " I do not think I will ever be Prime Minister," he wrote the same evening as he pondered despondently over the events of the day, " nor am I fitted for it. The chances against a success here are so great that my shares will go down."

[1] For an entertaining account of this particular domestic comedy the reader is referred to chapter VIII of Mr. H. Nicolson's " Some People."
[2] Letter to Lady Curzon, dated December 15th, 1922.
[3] Letter to Lady Curzon, dated November 22nd, 1922.

LORD CURZON AND ISMET PASHA AT LAUSANNE
(as seen by a French Cartoonist).

By courtesy of MONS. E. KELEN.

Progress was painfully slow and, on December the 14th, he wrote to Lady Curzon giving her a long account of the uphill battle which he had to fight:

> "We have had a day of much disturbance. The Turks are becoming impossible. Yesterday on the question of minorities Ismet made an irrelevant and rather insolent speech, attempting no sort of reply to the serious proposals which I had put forward on behalf of the Allies. I gave him an opportunity of making a better reply to-day. He did not take it. On the contrary his speech exhibited a complete indifference to the importance of the subject and a levity which was shocking. Thereupon I spoke with the utmost gravity. I said that neither I nor my colleagues were prepared to go on being treated in this way. If it were to continue we should leave Lausanne and Turkey must bear the responsibility before the world. I have now been here for over three weeks and not a single point is finally settled. It is wrangle, wrangle the whole day long. We have made every conceivable concession. But the Turks fight every point as though they were the conquerors of the world."

But any success, however short-lived, sent hope soaring, and this melancholy story was followed almost immediately by a shout of satisfaction:

> "I have really had a great triumph; for, after my indignant extemporary speech of yesterday, of which everyone here is talking, the Turks climbed down this morning and actually agreed to join the League of Nations, at which they had hitherto scoffed. I shall earn world-wide credit for this... Two days ago I was despondent about success here. To-day I begin to see a ray of hope."

While Lord Curzon was thus burdened with anxiety by events at Lausanne, he became quite unexpectedly the central figure in a sensational Parliamentary episode in London. One of the results of the Greek revolution in October had been the impeachment and

execution of M. Gounaris who, in his last desperate effort to save himself, had produced his letter to Lord Curzon of February the 15th, referred to in chapter XVII. On December the 3rd extracts from the letter were published in the *Sunday Express*; and, four days later, Sir E. Grigg in the House of Commons and Lord Birkenhead in the House of Lords asked for information, the latter declaring that not only had he never seen the letter, but that he greatly deplored the fact that the Cabinet had been given no opportunity of considering the grave state of affairs disclosed by it and of seeing whether there might not have been evolved from Cabinet discussion advice which might have prevented the ghastly tragedies which had followed. With ominous unanimity one member of the late Cabinet after another denied all knowledge either of M. Gounaris's letter or of Lord Curzon's reply; Mr. Lloyd George himself displaying as much astonishment at their contents as any of his colleagues.

It seemed, indeed, that Lord Curzon must have blundered in keeping from the Cabinet information concerning the state of the Greek army at a time when such information was of vital importance. It was not, however, Lord Curzon who had blundered, but those who attacked him. The whole thing was, in fact, a truly remarkable case of collective amnesia; for, as was conclusively proved, both letters had been circulated to the Cabinet, copies of them being found marked as "seen," among the papers of some at least of those who had professed ignorance of them. And in the belief—entertained of course in all sincerity—by the late Prime Minister that the letters had not been submitted to him, is to be seen a particularly striking example of the strange aberrations of which the human mind is capable. For not only had M. Gounaris in his letter of February the 27th, referred to in chapter XVII, informed Mr. Lloyd George of his communication to the British Foreign Minister and summarised its contents, but so recently as September Mr. Lloyd George himself had caused enquiries to be made at the Foreign Office whether any such letters had in fact passed between Lord Curzon and the Greek Prime Minister, and, if so, whether they had been circulated to members of the Cabinet? The reply had been in the affirmative and copies of the original letters had been supplied.

The facts were, indeed, beyond dispute; and on December the 11th Lord Birkenhead stated in the House of Lords that he accepted unreservedly the assurance given by Lord Salisbury that the letters had been communicated to the Cabinet at the time, and expressed his "sincere regret to every person high and low in the Foreign Office who was concerned in the circulation of these documents."

However much annoyance Lord Curzon may have been caused by the unsolicited notoriety which he derived from his having played so prominent though unwilling a part in the political sensation of the Session, he had little cause for subsequent regret, since the episode served to draw the attention of the public to the honourable part which he had played in the long-drawn drama of the Near East, the story of which has now been told in the immediately preceding chapters. But his irritation at the time was great, and was reflected in the bitterness of his comment on the burden of public life which crept into a letter to Lady Curzon written on Christmas Day—"I have often thought of you all during the day and realised that politics is a poor (even when it is not a dirty) game."

The end of the year saw Lord Curzon still at Lausanne and a Treaty of Peace not yet in sight. And on December the 26th he wrote a brief appreciation of the situation as he then saw it.

> "I have had a really bad day. Telegrams from all quarters indicating that the obstinacy of the Turks is deliberate and that they are preparing for a renewal of hostilities: and an interview of one hour and forty minutes with Ismet, who went on repeating the same old things twenty times over. One might just as well talk to the Duke of York's column. The Turks get more insolent and intractable every day and I am beginning to despair. . . Barrère and Garroni do not come back till to-morrow. I must then bring matters to an early head since nothing will induce me to go on with the pitiful game for another month."[1]

The failure to reach a decision was causing much anxiety in England; and in his correspondence with Lord Curzon, Mr. Bonar

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon.

Law was exhibiting a growing desire to see the negotiations at Lausanne brought to a speedy close at almost any cost. The Prime Minister was, in fact, seriously alarmed at the proportions of the Budget and was subjecting every head of expenditure to rigorous scrutiny. That we should make ourselves responsible for heavy outlays in nursing to adolescence the infant kingdom of Irak seemed to him quixotic and unnecessary. "As regards Mesopotamia," he wrote on December the 5th, "You know how keen I am, if we can, to get out of it." He never ceased pressing his view on this point upon Lord Curzon; and seized the opportunity, provided by the state of affairs depicted by the latter at the end of the year, to emphasise it once again:

> "The difficulties which you have so far succeeded in surmounting seem to be accumulating. To judge by the papers it looks as if it were possible that the Turks might seize upon Mosul as the ground upon which to break. This would be the most unfortunate thing which could happen in every way, as half of our own people and the whole of the world would say that we have refused peace for the sake of oil. . . If I made up my mind that we were free to leave, I would certainly not be responsible for continuing to hold the Mandate."[1]

And with this possibility in mind he invited Lord Curzon to meet him for a personal discussion in Paris. Lord Curzon looked forward to the meeting with little enthusiasm. "I have just got a telegram from Bonar," he wrote on December the 28th, "summoning me to Paris next Sunday for a day to see him. Oh, dear!"

His expectations of the lines on which the conversation was likely to run were fulfilled:

> "I found Bonar longing to clear out of Mosul, the Straits, and Constantinople, willing to give up anything and everything rather than have a row; astonished at the responsibility I have assumed at Lausanne and prepared for me to back down everywhere. . ."[2]

[1] Letter dated December 28th, 1922.
[2] Letter to Lady Curzon dated January 1st, 1923.

And if the meeting at Paris left Lord Curzon disturbed at what appeared to him to be the timidity of the Prime Minister, it equally left Mr. Bonar Law apprehensive of the enterprise of his Foreign Secretary. Turkish representatives in London, he informed Lord Curzon on January the 8th, insisted that it was the question of Mosul alone that prevented an immediate agreement at Lausanne. And he begged him to remember what he had endeavoured to impress upon him in Paris :

> " Indeed, although I think from conversations you know exactly what my views are, it is perhaps as well, to prevent possible misunderstanding, that I should again repeat that there are two things which seem to me vital. The first is that we should not go to war for the sake of Mosul ; and second, that if the French, as we know to be the case, will not join us, we shall not by ourselves fight the Turks to enforce what is left of the Treaty of Sèvres. I feel so strongly on both these points that unless something quite unforeseen should change my view, I would not accept responsibility for any other policy."

Lord Curzon was no more willing to go to war for Mosul than the Prime Minister himself. But he knew the strength of the case for retaining the vilayet as an integral part of the Kingdom of Irak, and he had not the smallest intention of handing over to Turkey a vast tract of territory, the retention of which he was certain could be more than justified in the eyes of the world. He waited, therefore, in patience until an opportunity of submitting his case to the judgment of Europe presented itself ; and when, towards the end of January, the Turkish delegate with greater courage than discretion gave him the opportunity which he sought, he seized it with avidity and with dramatic effect. In a statement made at a sitting of the Territorial Commission on January the 23rd, Ismet Pasha expounded his case for the rendition of the vilayet to Turkey. Before the end of the sitting he must have regretted his intrepidity. " I am grateful to Ismet Pasha," said Lord Curzon, " for having summed up the Turkish case in the statement to which we have just listened. I propose to take his case point by point and to give my reply, and I

shall be only too delighted if the Turkish case and the British case could be printed side by side and referred to the opinion of the world."

Lord Curzon's speech was an admirable example of the particular art of which he had always been so great a master. He knew the case far better than its Turkish exponents did. There was not a point of detail, however small, on which he was not able to speak with the authority derived from exact knowledge. First he stated with unanswerable logic the juridical and Treaty basis of the British position. Great Britain was under a threefold pledge which prohibited him as her representative from agreeing to the rendition for which Ismet Pasha asked; first, to the Arab nation to whom the British Government had given a solemn promise that they should not be returned to Turkish rule; secondly, to the Arab king of Irak who had been elected by the whole country including the people of the Mosul vilayet themselves, and with whom we had entered into definite obligations; and thirdly, to the League of Nations without whose consent we could not abandon the Mandate with which we had been entrusted. He summed up this preface to his more detailed reply to the specific arguments advanced by the Turkish delegation, as follows:

> "I hope that my argument up to this point will have convinced my hearers that it is quite impossible for my country, consistently with a due sense of honour, to run away from the pledges it has given, to break its word before the world, to cut out the vilayet of Mosul from the mandated territory and to give it back to the Turkish delegation."

He then proceeded to deal *seriatim* with the arguments, ethnographical, economic, historical and strategical, on which the Turkish case was based; and he very soon showed that against facts and figures which were ancient, incomplete and therefore demonstrably misleading, he was able to pit up-to-date statistics derived from careful investigations carried out by British officers who had visited every part of the vilayet, making an accurate record of the facts in each locality and in every town and village. Ismet Pasha had asked

what Lord Curzon could know about the population of Sulimanyeh and of Southern Kurdistan? It seemed that Lord Curzon knew a good deal about the population of both these places. There was not now, nor had there been for some years past, a solitary Turk in Sulimanyeh. And he proceeded to give to the Commission a mass of ethnographical information about the district in dispute which must have been gravely embarrassing to the Turkish delegation. The total Turkish population of the whole vilayet, he explained, was only 66,000 or one-twelfth of the inhabitants. And as to the Turks who made up that small fraction they were not Osmanli Turks at all. With ill-concealed delight the greater part of his audience listened to a brief but interesting historical digression:

> "They are descendants of a Turanian invasion from Central Asia which came to this country long before either the Seljuk or Ottoman invasions took place. They speak a Turkish dialect. It is not the dialect of Angora; it is not the dialect of Constantinople. There exist also a certain number of the families of the Turkish officers and officials who had been employed by the Turkish Government in that neighbourhood."

But here, from the point of view of the Turkish delegate's contention, was an awkward fact. A plebiscite had been taken and—"the whole of these people, except in the Kirkuk area, voted for inclusion in the Kingdom of Irak and for the Emir Feisal as its king." As for the city of Mosul itself, it was an Arab town built by Arabs. During centuries of Turkish occupation it had never lost its Arab character. "I am unable to understand," exclaimed Lord Curzon, "any principle of logic or equity by which it can be contended that this Arab country should be handed over to Angora."

From Sulimanyeh and Mosul Lord Curzon passed in orderly sequence to Southern Kurdistan. And here he was able to reinforce the data of the experts with knowledge derived from personal experience of the country. Lord Curzon had been to Southern Kurdistan. He had been the guest of Kurdish hosts. He did not wish, on this account, to pose as an authority on the country; but it at least gave him the right to take a discriminating interest in the

conclusions of the experts ; and with gentle sarcasm he challenged the history of the Kurdish people as retailed to the Commission by Ismet Pasha : ·

> " It was reserved for the Turkish delegation in one of their papers to discover for the first time in history that the Kurds were Turks. Nobody has ever found it out before."

Other authorities had been less dogmatic :

> " The origin of this people is somewhat obscure. Ismet Pasha in one of his Notes quoted a single authority which was of opinion that they were of Turanian origin ; but that is not an opinion that is shared by the best authorities, or indeed, so far as I know, by anybody else. It is a matter of general agreement that the Kurds are a people of Iranian race. They speak an Iranian language : their features are entirely distinct from those of the Turks, so are their customs and their relations with women. . .
>
> "As regards the general relations between Kurds and Turks, we all know that there have been constant manifestations of Kurdish discontent under Turkish rule. During the last four years the British Government have been bombarded with representations from disappointed Kurds asking us to interest ourselves in Kurdish autonomy or Kurdish independence. We have felt much sympathy for these representations. But, pray, do not let the Turkish delegation imagine for one moment that Great Britain desires to absorb a single Kurd into the British system. The whole of our information shows that the Kurds with their own independent history, customs, manners and character ought to be an autonomous race."

The economic and strategic arguments advanced by the Turkish delegation in support of their case were similarly demolished. A mere glance at the trade statistics was sufficient to dispose of the former ; and as for the latter, Ismet Pasha's contention that, if the vilayet were returned to Turkey, its Southern boundary would

constitute a sound defensive frontier for the land of Irak, was based on a defective knowledge of the geographical features of the country—"Ismet Pasha has suggested that the Jebel Hamrin will make a good defensive boundary. But it is well-known that this is not a great range of mountains but merely a series of rolling downs" A Turkish army based on Mosul would have Baghdad at its mercy. It could starve it into submission. It could, in fact, make an Arab kingdom well-nigh impossible. "I would not care to be on the throne of Baghdad if I had a Turkish army within sixty miles of me."

Lord Curzon then turned to answer an insinuation that had been made in many quarters that it was the presence of oil in the vilayet that was responsible for the reluctance shown by Great Britain to relinquish her hold upon it. And he concluded a memorable speech by playing a trump card which he still held in his hand. They had to determine the northern frontier of the mandated territory of Irak. The British Government were content, relying upon the strength of their case, to refer the matter to independent enquiry and decision and to abide by the result. To what arbiter should the question be submitted? Lord Curzon had no hesitation in making a suggestion—

> "As the area is part of a mandated territory and the British Government exercise mandatory powers there under the League of Nations, and as we cannot surrender or modify that position without the consent of the League of Nations, I think and propose that the League of Nations should be the body entrusted with the examination to which I have referred. . . . That is the suggestion which I submit to the Commission and the Turkish delegation and to which I await with interest their reply."

The speech created a profound impression alike upon those who listened to it and upon the far larger public which read it. Mr. Bonar Law who, as has been seen, viewed the question of the Mesopotamian Mandate from a very different angle to Lord Curzon, could not withhold his admiration for the manner in which he had handled the case. "Your speech," he wrote on January the 24th, "even as reported, was very good reading and I am sure you must

have enjoyed yourself—though perhaps that does not bring the results any nearer."

The note of mild pessimism on which Mr. Bonar Law concluded his encomium was not without justification. The Conference had now been in session for nine weeks. Great concessions had been made to the Turks. Yet they still showed little disposition to come to a settlement. And on the day after his speech on the question of Mosul, Lord Curzon discussed the whole situation with M. Bompard and the Marquis Garroni. As a result it was agreed that a time-table should be drawn up, under which the Turkish delegation would be given five days in which to examine the Treaty to which the Allies were now prepared to append their signatures. Every question of importance had been exhaustively discussed during the past nine weeks; and while the Allies declared their readiness to listen to representations on points of detail, they refused to reopen the discussion on questions of principle. It was agreed that, in the event of the Turkish delegates refusing to sign the Treaty, no further discussion could take place at Lausanne, whence the Allied delegations would withdraw at the end of the week.

With the Allies presenting a united front to Turkey, the prospect of a Treaty of Peace at last being signed seemed good. The whole situation was suddenly changed for the worse and the position which the Allies had laboriously built up undermined by the publication in Lausanne, on January the 30th, of a Havas Agency telegram containing a statement that the French Government had the day before instructed their High Commissioner in Constantinople to inform the Government at Angora that they did not regard the text of the Treaty submitted to the Turkish delegation at Lausanne as final, but as a document providing a basis for discussion between the Governments concerned. The effect upon the prospects of the Treaty was immediate. The Turkish delegation, quick to realise that the Allied front was once more broken, played for further time. Lord Curzon described the result in a letter to Lady Curzon, written after the sitting of the Conference on January the 31st—

> "My speech went off quite well this morning. But when Ismet Pasha asked for eight days' delay, and the French, Italians,

and myself retired to a private room to discuss it while the Conference was kept waiting, we had some very violent scenes. I absolutely declined to wait here the eight days or to allow the Conference to reassemble. The utmost I would agree to, and that with profound reluctance, was to wait here till Sunday night, when I mean in any case to return."

For the next four days all was confusion and uncertainty. "I have had two hours with Ismet this afternoon of the usual character," he wrote on February the 1st. "He knows now, however, that before Sunday he signs or I go, and wild horses will not induce me to budge." Still the Turkish delegation would not show their hand.

"Even at this late hour, midnight, the day before I go, I have not the slightest idea whether I am to get a Treaty or fail. The odds are, I think, decidedly against me, for my last shot has been fired and the Turks are running about everywhere swearing, but uncertain whether to surrender."

Lord Curzon had good reason for anxiety and irritation. The habits of a lifetime, however, prevailed, and finding that there was nothing more that he could do, he turned his mind to other matters. He spent his time while waiting for news of the Turkish decision in writing a long letter explaining in minute detail what his wishes were with regard to the filling of the incumbency which had fallen vacant at Kedleston.

The final scene in the long-drawn drama was enacted in Lord Curzon's room at the Beau Rivage Hotel on the evening of Sunday, February the 4th. There, at twenty minutes to six, were assembled the representatives of Great Britain, France, Italy and Turkey, with their assistants and experts in attendance. A Memorandum setting forth the final concessions which the Allies were willing to make to Turkish *amour propre* had been submitted the day before. A reply to it, raising yet further points, had been received. On the question of Mosul, Ismet Pasha had asked that the intervention of the League of Nations might be postponed for a year, in order that

an attempt might be made to reach a settlement by direct negotiation between the Turkish and British Governments. Anxious, if that were possible, to clinch the matter by one final gesture of magnanimity, Lord Curzon assented. But the sands were running out and the end of concession had at last been reached. "The Treaty," he declared, "must be signed here and now. There are only a few hours left. The world is looking for a solution and we must find one before we leave this room."

The French and Italian representatives appealed in turn to Ismet Pasha to sign the Treaty. Yet he could not bring himself to do so. Having at last declared his acceptance of those portions of it which had been dealt with by Lord Curzon's Commission, he now raised objections to the provisions embodied in the economic and judicial clauses which had been the special interest of the French and Italian delegations. For two hours the discussion dragged wearily on, the Turkish delegates remaining deaf alike to argument and to appeal; and shortly before 8 o'clock Lord Curzon rose. A little after 9 o'clock, he said, he must be in the train. There was still a brief space before the door was closed irrevocably against success. If, after further reflection and consultation with his own experts, Ismet Pasha felt able to sign, well and good; if not, the Conference must come to an end with a confession of failure. It might be the last time, he added with some show of feeling, that he would ever see Ismet Pasha. He fervently desired to carry back to England a memory of friendship, and nothing was nearer to his heart than the hope that he might sign with him before he left a common pact of peace and goodwill.

Thus came to an end the famous Conference of Lausanne. A little after 9 p.m. the special train with Lord Curzon and the other members of the British delegation on board steamed out of the station. And it was not long before the world learned that no Treaty had been signed. The ill-judged gesture from Paris which was the cause of the final breakdown of the Conference was the more unfortunate in that at Lausanne itself Lord Curzon and the representative of France were in close accord. M. Barrère has himself borne testimony to the fact that, in spite of the forebodings of the pessimists, he worked throughout in harmony with the British

Foreign Minister. And it may confidently be affirmed that he saw in the outcome of Lausanne a striking illustration of the view that common action between France and England could carry all before it in the arena of diplomacy, while divergence entailed misfortune for both countries.

The temporary failure to obtain a Treaty did not, however, obscure the personal triumph of Lord Curzon.

> "I feel I cannot let this letter go," wrote one who had not always been a whole-hearted admirer of him, "without my telling you a little of what I feel about your signal public service at Lausanne. It was one of those miracles of statesmanship which deserves to stand with the work that Talleyrand did at the Congress of Vienna. You went into the Conference without a single trump in your hand and with everything against you, and yet, by sheer power of management, good sense and integrity of purpose and knowledge of facts, you soon gained complete predominance. I trust and hope that all will still go well; but even if it does not, your achievement will be undimmed. The nation owes you a great debt of gratitude, for you have recovered our diplomatic status which had fallen so low. . . ." [1]

This appreciation of Lord Curzon's achievement was a just one, as a cursory glance at subsequent events will show. After the break-up of the Lausanne Conference, Ismet Pasha proceeded to Angora, whence, at the conclusion of a stormy Session, the cause of peace supported by Mustapha Kemal Pasha and Ismet Pasha himself gained the day. There followed a letter from Ismet Pasha to the Allied Governments, together with a Note putting forward certain proposals for the modification of the draft Treaty presented at Lausanne. These communications were discussed by the representatives of Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan at a meeting under Lord Curzon's chairmanship in London, in March; and, as a result of this exchange of views, identic Notes were despatched to Constantinople for transmission to the Turkish Government at Angora, inviting Mustapha Kemal Pasha to send representatives at as early a

[1] Letter from Mr. J. St. Loe Strachey, February 17th, 1923.

date as possible to Lausanne, for the purpose of discussing with the Allies such of the Turkish counter-proposals as they were prepared to consider. The second Conference of Lausanne assembled in April with Sir Horace Rumbold, British High Commissioner at Constantinople, as the chief representative of Great Britain. For three months "the process of haggling," as Lord Curzon subsequently described it, "was continued with pertinacity and at a length that recalled the palmiest days of Oriental diplomacy in the past."[1] At last, on July the 24th, a Treaty of Peace was signed, and this wearisome and melancholy chapter in the history of the relations between Turkey and Europe was brought to a close.

It was easy enough for those who chose to ignore the conditions under which the Treaty was negotiated, to criticise it. Yet to have secured the agreement of all concerned to a Turkey restricted to the Anatolian plains and highlands and the narrow European territories of her former Empire up to the confines of Bulgaria on the one hand, and of Greece, with her frontier determined, with the exception of the tiny enclave of Karagach, by the course of the river Maritza, on the other; and to have won for the nations of the world the freedom of the Straits, with the guarantees which unfortified and demilitarised zones on each side of them afforded for the unhindered access of their warships and their merchantmen, were in the circumstances no mean achievements. That the Treaty secured to the minorities in Turkey—in the main Greeks and Armenians—a smaller measure of protection than he had striven to obtain for them, Lord Curzon did not deny.

> "The Turks in their passion for a self-sufficing and self-centred national existence were resolved," he declared, "upon purging their State of all alien elements—a policy which, in my view, was grossly mistaken, which has been attended by incidents of great cruelty and hardship, and which, as time passes, they will often have occasion to repent. I did, however, obtain this much, that Turkey undertook to apply for membership of the League of Nations after the ratification of peace; and at the hands of that tribunal the afflicted minorities will

[1] Speech at the Imperial Conference, October 5th, 1923.

receive such protection as it may be in the power of Europe to afford."[1]

And if Lord Curzon was disappointed with the protection secured for the minorities, still less did he regard with satisfaction the financial and economic clauses of the Treaty. Nevertheless, he thought that, taking a broad view of what had been accomplished—the final restoration of peace in the Near East, the freedom of the Straits, the liberation of the entire block of Arab countries, the acquisition of the sacred soil of the Gallipoli Peninsula, the enhanced prestige of Great Britain in Turkey which was generally admitted, together with the appeasement in all Moslem countries which was already following on the reconciliation between Great Britain and Turkey, were results " sufficient to justify our labours at Lausanne and to silence the not always disinterested and frequently ungenerous critics who have derided our handling of a problem which they were powerless to compose themselves."[2]

It only remains to point out that Lord Curzon's confidence in the strength of the case for the retention of the vilayet of Mosul as an integral part of the Kingdom of Irak, which he had laid before the Territorial Commission at Lausanne on January the 23rd, 1923, was more than justified by the subsequent history of the matter. Direct negotiation between the Turkish and British Governments failed to provide a solution and in due course the question was submitted to the Council of the League of Nations. Though Lord Curzon did not live to see it, the decision of the Council on the question of the northern boundary of Irak given in December 1925, and eventually accepted by Turkey in June 1926, confirmed the King of Irak in his possession of the vilayet of Mosul, and justified in almost every particular the case which had been so brilliantly presented by Lord Curzon all but three years before.

[1] Speech at the Imperial Conference, October 5th, 1923. [2] *Ibid.*

CHAPTER XXI

THE SUMMER OF 1923

THE spring of 1923 was a troubled one for Lord Curzon. During the three months that he had spent at Lausanne he had found little time to devote to the solution, or even to the consideration, of problems other than those with which he was directly dealing. It was of deliberate purpose that he had gone to Lausanne in person instead of issuing instructions from London and delegating to others the actual work of negotiation, as had been done by the Foreign Ministers of the other leading Powers represented at the Conference. For the fact was that his heart still dwelt in Asia rather than in Europe. He had once quoted with obvious approval an *obiter dictum* attributed to Napoleon—" Cette vieille Europe m'ennuie ! " And it was one which must often have been on the tip of his own tongue as he endeavoured to thread his way wearily through the maze of conflicting interests and cross-purposes, from which the protagonists in the political and diplomatic struggle in progress on the Continent seemed wholly unable to extricate themselves.

News of the trend of opinion and of events in Paris, Rome, Brussels and Berlin was, of course, constantly obtruding itself upon him ; but it fell for the most part upon an inattentive mind, and the visions which it conjured up flitted smudgily across the background of his consciousness with much of the inconsequence of passing dreams. He was not capable, as he himself frankly admitted, of skimming the cream from a basin of milk. If he took up a question at all, he must take it up thoroughly ; study it *ab ovo ;* read and assimilate everything that was on record concerning it ; familiarise himself with its smallest details. And, with his mind absorbed by the

daily complexities of the Turkish negotiations, he shrank from the labour of thus taking up the question of Reparations, which by the dawn of the year 1923 had become for the Allied Powers the question of the hour. "As I could not take part in the Reparations talks," he told Lord Crewe, who, at his request, had recently accepted the Paris Embassy, "I have preferred not to interfere at all, but to leave it entirely to Bonar."[1]

He did so with all the more readiness because he realised that in the attitude which the French Government were determined to assume would be found one more obstacle in the way of any real re-establishment of peace in Europe—"of which," he impressed upon Lord Crewe, when sending him to represent Great Britain at Paris, "a clear and solid understanding between France and ourselves is an essential condition." For the letters which he received from time to time from the Prime Minister left little room for doubt as to the extent of the divergence which was opening up between the two Governments on this issue. "As regards our Conference," Mr. Bonar Law wrote on December the 12th, 1922, "it has been a complete failure, as indeed was inevitable, for Poincaré came determined on two points: (1) that whatever happened he would occupy Essen, (2) that he could not reduce the amount of the French claims except to the exact extent by which we reduced their debt to us. . . . I made it clear to him that no British Government could agree to the occupation of the Ruhr, to enforce demands which everyone recognised as impossible."

There, indeed, lay the crucial difference between the views taken by the Governments of France and Great Britain respectively. The British Government faced the economic realities of the situation with a gaze unclouded by other considerations. They may have suspected the motives with which the German Government had embarked upon the policy of inflation which had started the mark on what Lord Curzon described as "the first downward movement to its final catastrophic descent"; but they did not allow their suspicions to influence their judgment. They surveyed the situation dispassionately as it existed; saw that, before any substantial sum in Reparations was possible, some sort of order must be evolved out of

[1] Letter dated December 25th, 1922.

the chaos into which German finances had fallen, and made proposals accordingly. Briefly, what Mr. Bonar Law proposed when he proceeded to Paris in January was that the Reparation debt should be reduced to £2,500,000,000; that bonds of that amount should be immediately issued; and that, subject to the establishment in Berlin of a foreign Financial Council to supervise the reorganisation of German finance, a four year moratorium should be granted. He accompanied his proposal with an offer, in the event of the above suggestions being accepted, to cancel the French and Italian war debts to Great Britain, less certain sums representing gold deposits already in British hands and various minor financial adjustments; and he added that should Germany fail to satisfy the Council that she was making adequate efforts at financial reorganisation, he would be prepared to join in the forcible seizure of German revenues and assets and in the extension of the occupation.

The French Government looked at the matter from a different point of view. They needed money badly enough and were determined to get it if they could. But when it came to a question of the means by which the object which they had in view could best be effected, their judgment was always influenced by considerations which were predominantly political; and from first to last the lure of "productive pledges," involving an advance into the Ruhr, proved too strong to be resisted. In these circumstances there was nothing to be done but to agree to differ; and on January the 11th, with Great Britain standing aside, the occupation of the Ruhr began.

When, therefore, early in February 1923, Lord Curzon returned to England from Lausanne to resume his normal duties at the Foreign Office, he found Great Britain and France severed by what was euphemistically referred to as a *rupture cordiale*, and himself committed to a policy of benevolent neutrality towards a venture which he agreed with the Prime Minister in thinking was doomed to failure. A policy of benevolent neutrality in such circumstances was one which it was a good deal easier to criticise than to defend. The spectacle of a British Government looking on impotently while her chief Ally got tangled up in a situation which was little removed from war, was certainly not an impressive one. "Public opinion here is getting more restive," Lord Curzon wrote on

March the 18th, "and will not stand benevolent neutrality *ad infinitum*."[1]

Not the least of the disadvantages of the policy, from the point of view of a man of Lord Curzon's sensitive nature, was the equivocal position in which it inevitably placed him personally. As the representative of a Power which had openly declared its neutrality, he could not refuse the frequent approaches which the German Government made through the agency of the German Ambassador in London; nor could he be unaware of the jealous eye with which the French Government regarded the constant visits to the Foreign Office of the representative of a Government with which they themselves had broken off relations. And when, in March, Herr von Sthamer asked him what he thought of a tentative proposal which he declared the German Government would be willing to bring to the notice of M. Poincaré through the good offices of the British Prime Minister, he made little attempt to conceal his irritation. He felt sure, he said, that Mr. Bonar Law would agree with him in saying that no more unfortunate step could be taken than for Germany to communicate her proposals to a single Power alone, and more particularly to Great Britain. Whatever the merits of the proposals themselves, they would be prejudiced from the start and would be likely to meet with instantaneous rejection at the hands of France. As to the nature of the particular proposals, it was not for him to advise the German Government; but he would venture to suggest that they should consider the extreme unwisdom of putting forward proposals which were almost certain to be rejected because of their inadequacy. In his private correspondence he made his feelings plainer still:

> "Bonar and I saw the German on Friday and told him that his Government must get a move on, and that it was no good dishing up bread and milk to the French, who would require some rather stronger sustenance."[2]

These worries brought on an attack of the complaint with which he had been prostrated during the previous summer, and he felt

[1] Letter to Lord Crewe.
[2] Letter to Lord Crewe dated March 18th, 1923.

obliged to seek a renewal of the treatment which had then proved efficacious. "I detest having to come abroad again for another phlebitis treatment," he told Lord Crewe on March the 29th; "but the strain upon me recently has brought back the swelling and pain in my leg and I must really do something."

On his return to England three weeks later, he dealt exhaustively with the situation in a speech in the House of Lords; and, tired of abortive conversations behind the scenes, he took occasion to repeat in public the advice which he had frequently tendered to the German Government:

> "If Germany were to make an offer of her willingness and intention to pay, and to have the payment fixed by authorities properly charged; and if she were at the same time to offer specific guarantees for the continued payments, an advance might be made. That is the substance of the advice which I have consistently given to the German Government, the general wisdom of which I see no reason to doubt."[1]

The first fruits of this tentative eirenicon were scarcely flattering to Lord Curzon's hopes, for the speech drew from the French little but disparaging comment and from the German Government an absurdly inadequate response. "You will return to a time of exceptional anxiety," he told Lord Crewe, who was on his way back to Paris after a brief absence. "The French have given a very poor and niggardly reception to a speech from me that did not certainly suffer from a lack of generosity . . . I suppose that whatever the Germans put forward, he (Poincaré) will turn down, and we shall be plunged again in the old morass."[2] At a later date—on June the 7th—the German Government made a second and more hopeful overture, offering to accept the decision of an impartial international body as to the amount of the Reparations to be met and as to the method of payment, and proposing certain guarantees including the security of the customs and railways. But by then the financial aspect of the matter had been wholly submerged by the political, and France

[1] Speech in the House of Lords on April 20th, 1923.
[2] Letter dated April 28th, 1923.

was bent less upon obtaining Reparations than upon breaking the passive resistance and spirit of the German people. Moreover, there intervened an unforeseen crisis in the domestic situation in Great Britain which was destined profoundly to affect Lord Curzon personally.

For some time past Mr. Bonar Law's health had not been good, and by April rumour had become busy as to his possible intentions ; so much so that Lord Curzon wrote in some alarm from Tours, where he was himself undergoing his cure, enquiring if there was any foundation for the stories which were in circulation. The Prime Minister's reply was reassuring :

> " Your rumour is without foundation. I have not been up to the mark for a month or six weeks, but I have no intention of resigning unless my health should make it impossible to continue." [1]

Nevertheless, he found it necessary to take a rest abroad ; and on Lord Curzon's return from Tours he found himself called upon to preside at meetings of the Cabinet pending the Prime Minister's return. " I have had a very busy and anxious time over this Ruhr crisis," he wrote on May the 7th ; ". . . . I had a Cabinet this morning at which my policy and Despatches were unanimously endorsed." [2] News of the Prime Minister's health did not improve ; and when it became known that instead of returning to England he had been advised to take a sea voyage, it was natural enough that Lord Curzon's friends should be telling him that the crowning ambition of his life was about to see fulfilment.

There were, unfortunately, only too good grounds for the rumours concerning the Prime Minister. The results of the voyage were disappointing. " During the trip on board the boat I was very miserable, suffering pain all the time," he wrote afterwards ; " but I trusted that after I got on land I would feel the benefit of the fresh air." [3] This hope was not realised, and he asked Sir Thomas Horder

[1] Letter dated April 5th, 1923.
[2] Letter to Lady Curzon.
[3] Letter to Lord Curzon, dated May 20th, 1923.

to visit him in Paris. When the latter expressed grave dissatisfaction with his condition and suggested a consultation in London, Mr. Bonar Law realised that the burden of the Premiership was one which he was no longer able to bear. He spent the afternoon of Thursday, May the 17th, with Lord and Lady Crewe, explaining the whole situation so far as it affected him. "It was a pathetic moment which we shall not easily forget," Lord Crewe wrote a few days afterwards.

Parliament had risen for the Whitsuntide recess and Lord Curzon was at Montacute when, on the morning of Monday, May the 21st, he received a letter from Mr. Bonar Law announcing his resignation. The consultation had been held in London on the 19th, and had left him no choice, he said. "I understand," he added at the end of his letter, "that it is not customary for the King to ask the Prime Minister to recommend his successor in circumstances like the present and I presume that he will not do so; but if, as I hope, he accepts my resignation at once, he will have to take immediate steps about my successor."[1] This, if indefinite, was at least not discouraging.

Montacute was not connected with the outside world by telephone; and since Lord Curzon conjectured that a hurried return to London on Whit Monday might give rise to unpleasant comment, he remained where he was, a prey to the inevitable anxieties and uncertainties of the situation. To few men could the ordeal of that day have been a more fiery one. Some there may have been who, while not desirous of the Premiership, may yet have been willing to accept it for the sake of duty; others who have toyed pleasantly with the idea of some day attaining to it; others, again, who have frankly and vehemently coveted it; but there can have been few, indeed, who from early youth have planned their lives on the assumption that the Premiership was to be an integral and essential part of the structure. If it is too much to say this of Lord Curzon, it is at least certain that in the minds of some of those who knew him from his boyhood, had taken root the conviction that, ever since his Oxford days, if not, indeed, since his last years at Eton, he had set before himself the ambition of being the one Englishman of whom

[1] Letter dated May 20th, 1923.

LORD AND LADY CURZON
arriving in London from Montacute, May 22, 1923

history would be able to say that he had held the two offices of Viceroy of India and Prime Minister of England. And when the first part of this vaulting ambition had been accomplished before the age of forty, there had been many who had not hesitated to predict the accomplishment of it in its entirety. ". . . . but what to us all is much more important," a friend had written when congratulating him on his appointment to the Viceroyalty, " you will come back in a few years ready to be Prime Minister. As I have long prophesied that you would go to India, perhaps you will accept this prophecy also." [1]

When Lord Crewe had written his account of the afternoon which Mr. Bonar Law had spent with him, he had added : " Of course I had anticipated that you would be asked to succeed him, and except for what one sees in the papers I am still quite in the dark about the cause of the actual selection." [2]

The Fates, indeed, could hardly have devised a more cruel way of inflicting the blow which they had in store, than circumstances actually conspired to bring about.

On Monday evening the state of suspense in which Lord Curzon had spent the day was relieved to some extent by the receipt of a message from Lord Stamfordham in which he expressed a desire to see him the next day. The great moment of his life which was to place the crown upon a long and meritorious career of service to the State was, surely, at hand. The state of pleasurable anticipation in which he travelled up to town was heightened by the comments of the morning papers. " I found in the morning press," he jotted down, " an almost unanimous opinion that the choice lying between Baldwin and myself, there was no question as to the immense superiority of my claims and little doubt as to the intentions of the King-The crowd of press photographers at Paddington and my house—deceptive and even worthless as these phenomena are—at least indicated the popular belief."

At 2.30 p.m. Lord Stamfordham called at 1 Carlton House Terrace. There is no need to dwell upon the interview, which cannot have been anything but painful either to Lord Curzon or to his

[1] Letter from Sir F. Jeune, dated August 11th, 1898.
[2] Letter dated May 23rd, 1923.

visitor. It was Lord Stamfordham's unpalatable task to convey to Lord Curzon the decision of the King that, since the Labour party constituted the official Opposition in the House of Commons and were unrepresented in the House of Lords, the objections to a Prime Minister in the Upper Chamber were insuperable. This possibility had occurred to Lord Curzon himself some years before; for he had told Sir G. Cunningham in 1917 that, with Labour so strongly represented in the Lower House, he doubted whether even so outstanding a member of the peerage as the late Lord Salisbury would have been Prime Minister.[1] Yet, in his heart of hearts, he could not really bring himself to believe that with his long record of public service behind him he could be passed over. And he asked leave to submit for consideration certain aspects of the case which he thought might not have been given due weight. When, however, he learned that it was too late and that Mr. Baldwin had already been summoned to Buckingham Palace, bitterness flooded in upon his soul. And in the account which he committed to paper of this, the most galling experience which life had brought him, he poured out his pent-up feelings in a torrent of agonised despair. "Such," he exclaimed, "was the reward I received for nearly forty years of public service in the highest offices; such was the manner in which it was intimated to me that the cup of honourable ambition had been dashed from my lips, and that I could never aspire to fill the highest office in the service of the Crown."[2]

The poignancy of his feelings was added to by the confident assumption made by some of his friends that the prize was already his. On the very day on which the blow fell, the friend of his boyhood, Oscar Browning, was writing in jubilation from Italy:

> "This morning's *Piccolo* says that you are Prime Minister, and I hope it is true. Please accept my warmest congratulations. I always told you that I should not be satisfied unless you were. I shall look forward with great interest to all the great things you are going to do."

[1] In the course of a conversation recorded by Sir G. Cunningham on September 13th, 1917.

[2] From a note written in pencil describing his interview with Lord Stamfordham.

The depths of his disappointment provide a measure of the moral greatness which at times, though not always, he was able to summon to his aid. Letters of sympathy poured in upon him from all sides; and the burden of the greater number of them was a prayer that, great though the sacrifice must be, he would yet consent to remain at his post. And if under the first shock of bitterness he shrank from the course thus pressed upon him, he could not long remain insensible to the significance of an appeal so movingly and so widely made, and on May the 23rd he replied to the invitation which had reached him from the new Prime Minister:

> "My dear Baldwin,
>
> Allow me to congratulate you warmly upon your appointment to be Prime Minister and to wish you every success in your administration. I have seriously considered your kind invitation to me to continue in the office which I recently filled. I have every desire to retire. But, as there are certain things which in the public interest I ought, perhaps, to endeavour to carry through, and as my retirement at this moment might be thought to involve distrust in your administration, which would be a quite unfounded suspicion, I will for the present continue at the Foreign Office."

"Of course it is a great disappointment," he wrote on the following day. "But public life is made up of such, and the only thing is to go on and do one's best, as I shall try to do."[1] And four days later, in a letter to the same correspondent, he mentioned—"I am just off to the meeting at which I am to propose that Baldwin be elected Leader of the Conservative Party." No one will be likely to question the nature of the ordeal through which he was called upon to pass or the moral courage which enabled him to emerge triumphant from it. His bearing, indeed, made a great impression upon those who, knowing the immense emotional deeps of his ardent nature, could gauge the strength of the turmoil that raged within. And he was the recipient of many moving tributes:

> "I hope you will not think it impertinent of me to write to

[1] Letter to Lord Crewe, dated May 24th, 1923.

say how much I admired the manner in which you presided over our meeting to-day and the good taste and eloquence with which you spoke in proposing Mr. Baldwin's election to the leadership of the party. Your speech was magnificent and the manner in which the whole affair was conducted will, I am sure, conduce greatly to the harmony of the party and the strength of the Government."[1]

Thus, with a gesture of singular magnanimity, Lord Curzon smoothed the way for the formation of Mr. Baldwin's first Administration.

When Lord Curzon told the Prime Minister that there were certain things which he supposed that, in the public interest, he ought to endeavour to carry through, he had in mind more particularly the renewed negotiations with Turkey at Lausanne, of which a brief account has been given in the preceding chapter; the controversy upon which he had entered with Soviet Russia, and the attempt upon which he had recently embarked to find some way out of the disastrous impasse in which the leading nations of Europe found themselves as a result of the Franco-Belgian occupation of the Ruhr.

The Trade Agreement with Soviet Russia, entered into by Mr. Lloyd George's Government in the spring of 1921, had always been looked on by Lord Curzon with feelings of cold disfavour. He had never believed that the stipulation prefixed to the Agreement, that the Soviet authorities should refrain from hostile propaganda against Great Britain, would be observed. And looking back over the events of the two years during which the Agreement had been in operation, he saw on all sides incontrovertible evidence of the fulfilment of his forebodings. It was, indeed, notorious that from the first the undertaking given by the Soviet Government had been consistently and flagrantly violated. As a result of representations made during the autumn and winter of 1921 some curtailment of the baleful activities of the Soviet agents had been noticed. But the lull had been of short duration, and by the spring of 1923 acts of hostility had become so numerous and so grave that Lord Curzon determined to tolerate so anomalous a state of affairs no longer. In

[1]Letter from Sir J. P. Hewett dated May 28th, 1923.

Irak, in Persia, in Afghanistan—even in India itself—Russian agents, controlled and financed from Moscow, were fostering and organising the forces of sedition and, where possible, inciting the peoples of Asia to rebellion. Nor was this all. Outrages committed on British subjects in Russia itself, including one notorious case of judicial murder, remained unatoned; and British fishing trawlers, seized in defiance of the almost universally accepted conventions of international law, remained imprisoned in Russian ports. Demands made for compensation for the lives of British sailors sacrificed in the course of these piratical onslaughts, were treated with cynical indifference; while, to crown everything, representations made by the British Government against acts of religious persecution, the brutality of which had excited widespread consternation and had provoked the indignant remonstrance of the civilised world, were met by replies of so insolent a character as to be returned by the accredited British Agent to whom they were addressed.

Lord Curzon drew up his indictment; submitted it to the Cabinet; asked and received authority to present his demands in the form of an ultimatum; gave the Soviet Government ten days within which to make a satisfactory reply, and awaited with interest the result. It was not to be supposed that the Soviet Government were going to admit themselves in the wrong; but they made a reply from which it was clear that they attached far too great importance to the Trade Agreement to run the risk of losing it; and after some further exchange of Notes, they complied substantially with all Lord Curzon's demands. A new and more explicit declaration on the subject of propaganda was accepted and signed; the Russian representative, whose recall from Kabul Lord Curzon had demanded, was transferred to another post, "in accordance with the normal arrangements governing the movements of members of the Russian Diplomatic Service"; the letters which the British Agent had refused to receive were withdrawn; compensation was agreed to in respect of the "repressive measures" taken against British subjects in Russia; and orders were issued to the Soviet maritime authorities to refrain from interfering with British fishermen plying their business outside the three mile limit, pending the conclusion of an international agreement on the whole question. If there was

little to give ground for complacency in the foreign outlook as a whole, Lord Curzon found some crumbs of satisfaction in the outcome of this controversy. "I think that I may claim to have won a considerable victory over the Soviet Government," he wrote on June the 13th, "and I expect them to behave with more circumspection for some time to come."[1]

He found far less reason for complacency as he surveyed the situation in the Ruhr. It is true that in the German Note of June the 7th he saw the prospect of a possible settlement; and he commended it, therefore, to the favourable consideration of the Allies. The points of view from which the French and British Governments had all along regarded the question remained, however, unaltered. More than ever since she had met with the unexpected and obstinate resistance of Germany did France look at it as essentially a political matter; more than ever since Great Britain saw the German market, which had gradually been assuming importance as a factor in her export trade once more, incontinently collapse, did she regard the question from a strictly economic point of view. And, in plain and unmistakable language, Lord Curzon repeatedly enforced this point:

> "As long as the most highly developed area of German industrial life remains under military rule, and is made the scene of political agitation, it is difficult to see how the economic problem can be solved. It may be possible to break Germany's power of resistance by such means; but it will be at the price of the very recovery on which the Allied policy depends for its ultimate success."[2]

French intransigence caused him infinite worry and annoyance. His constant interviews with the French Ambassador became a positive pain, and, in these circumstances, it is not surprising if something of the acerbity of the conversations which took place behind the closed doors of the Foreign Secretary's room, crept into his written Despatches. His comment on a statement made to

[1] Letter to Lord Crewe, dated June 13th, 1923.
[2] Despatch from Lord Curzon to the Comte de Saint Aulaire, dated July 20th, 1923.

him by the Comte de Saint Aulaire on June the 11th, that the French Government could discuss with their Allies the proposals embodied in the German Note only after passive resistance in the Ruhr had ceased, was indicative of the strained relations existing between them:

> "From the statement which Your Excellency made to me, it would almost seem as if the cessation of passive resistance was regarded by the French Government as equivalent to active co-operation of the German population in whatever measures, coercive or other, the French authorities may see fit to take or order. This would be an excessive and an impracticable demand, even if it were conceded that French action in the Ruhr was justified and authorised under the Treaty of Versailles."[1]

The attitude of the French Government did, indeed, seem to him to be unreasonable. "His (Poincaré's) idea," he wrote on June the 28th, "that he can both obtain a cessation of passive resistance with our aid, and yet persist in unabated military occupation, is quite untenable and must be warmly repudiated."[2]

Nevertheless, in spite of constant discouragement, Lord Curzon persisted in his attempts to find a solution. The rigid attitude of M. Poincaré was, in fact, creating a very unfavourable impression in London; and in his letters to Lord Crewe he sought to warn him of the rising temper of the Cabinet:

> "The gist of it all is that we will not go on drifting any longer. Even the pro-French element in the Cabinet . . . . are indignant with Poincaré, and are hot for independent action. We have shown patience, toleration, even weakness. But now we mean to move. . . . You may rely upon me to go as far as is possible in keeping together the Entente. But act we must and will."[3]

Lord Curzon's next step was to draw up and communicate to the Allied Governments the draft of a reply to the German Note of

[1] Despatch from Lord Curzon to the Comte de Saint Aulaire, dated June 13th, 1923.
[2] Letter to Lord Crewe. [3] Letter dated July 8th, 1923.

June the 7th, to which he hoped they might be willing to subscribe. The situation, he urged, was likely to grow not better but worse with every day of unnecessary delay. "A recurrence to procedure by ultimatums may, indeed, produce tardy and reluctant capitulation; but little satisfaction will accrue if it fails to produce substantial deliveries either in cash or in kind." It was now acknowledged, he asserted, that the Reparation figure laid down in 1921 no longer corresponded to the realities of the situation. A revised estimate of what was practicable must sooner or later be made. And he threw out the suggestion that in the enquiry which would be necessary the co-operation of America, whether in an official or an unofficial capacity, should be sought.

It was not the first time that this suggestion had been made; and it proved in the end the key to the solution of the problem. For it was the enquiry conducted by the Dawes Committee and the plan proposed by them when they reported in the spring of 1924, that proved to be the turning point on the road down which Europe was heading towards a pit of irretrievable financial disaster. And Lord Curzon is entitled to the credit for having consistently urged, and, in the end, secured the co-operation which became so vital a factor in the eventual success of the policy which he unflinchingly pursued. "We have persuaded the Americans to come into the Reparations Committee," he told Lord Crewe on December the 12th.

But before the Reparations Commission, with Lord Curzon's enthusiastic support, decided, on November the 30th, to set up the body which came to be known by the name of its chairman, General Dawes, he had cause to pass through many anxious moments. His Despatch of July the 20th, covering his draft reply to the German Note, met with a cold reception at the hands of M. Poincaré, who firmly refused to admit the necessity for any enquiry into Germany's capacity to pay. What, then, was to be done? There seemed, indeed, little to be done except to re-state, comprehensively and explicitly, the position of the British Government and to continue to hold a watching brief for moderation and common sense. This was what Lord Curzon proceeded to do.

In a Despatch addressed to the French and Belgian Ambassa-

dors on August the 11th, and presented to Parliament immediately afterwards, he indulged in a critical analysis of the Reparations claims which the French and Belgian Governments were now putting forward. These constituted a radical alteration of the percentages of the total sum to be paid by Germany which had been agreed to at Spa, to the grave disadvantage of all their other Allies. The Government of Great Britain could not consent to ignore the legitimate claims of the British people. And it was desirable that the hard facts of the position as it concerned them should be clearly stated. Sunk ships and cargoes rotting at the bottom of the sea might not shock the eye like the ruined villages of France and Belgium. But they were equally material damage caused by German aggression and represented equally heavy losses of national wealth. In a few arresting sentences he painted a picture of the burden which Great Britain was being called upon to bear:

> "Apart from the extensive material damages suffered by Great Britain, His Majesty's Government are now involved in heavy payments to meet unemployment, in respect of which they have been compelled to spend over £400,000,000 since the Armistice. They alone, among the Allies, are paying interest on debts incurred abroad during the War, representing a capital sum due to the United States Government of £1,000,000,000 at the present rate of exchange. They alone have been deprived, in the Allied interest, of foreign securities estimated at from £700,000,000 to £800,000,000 which would otherwise substantially assist in the payment of the British debt in America. Notwithstanding these gigantic burdens, Great Britain made an offer at the Paris Conference of January last to forego her rights to reimbursement of her damages, and expressed her readiness, by reducing the debts of the Allies, to treat her share of German Reparations as if it were a repayment by her Allies of their debts due to her. It would be inequitable, and it is impossible to ask the British taxpayer, already much more heavily burdened than his French and Belgian Allies, to make further sacrifices by modifying the Spa percentages for the benefit of France and Belgium."

While the British Government had indicated their readiness to join in advising the German Government to withdraw without delay the ordinances and decrees which had promoted passive resistance, they could not subscribe to the thesis that passive resistance must cease unconditionally as being a violation of the Treaty of Versailles. On the contrary, basing their opinion on the advice of the highest legal authorities in Great Britain, they held that the action of France and Belgium in the Ruhr, quite apart from the question of expediency, was without the sanction of the Treaty itself. But they were quite willing that this question should be referred to the International Court of Justice at the Hague. In the meantime a continuance of forcible interference with the economic life of Germany could only prevent the realisation of any surplus of Reparation, and by intensifying the disorder of German finance and currency would have the gravest reactions upon trade:

> "In spite of wholesale seizures, the occupation of the Ruhr by France and Belgium has produced, at great cost, less receipts for the Allies, notably of coke and coal, than was forthcoming in the previous year. Moreover, His Majesty's Government feel that the resulting situation involves great and growing danger to the peaceful trade of the world and, not least, of this country. His Majesty's Government regard a continuance of the present position as fraught with the gravest risks, both economic and political. They consider the impartial fixation of Germany's liability at a figure not inconsistent with her practical power of making payment a matter of great urgency and they have suggested what appears to them to be an appropriate means to this end."

If this view was accepted, Great Britain would still be prepared to act upon the proposal which Mr. Bonar Law had laid before the Paris Conference in January—a proposal which meant that, in the interest of a complete general settlement, Great Britain would be prepared to waive a very large part of the amount for which the British taxpayer held the due obligations of the Governments of the Allies.

There, for the time being, Lord Curzon felt that matters must be allowed to rest. And having disposed of the matter to the best of his ability, he left England for another short course of treatment at Bagnolles, and turned his mind characteristically to other matters. "I have brought here to finish," he wrote from that place on August the 12th, "the book which I partially wrote about Government House and other places at Calcutta ten years ago, and then abandoned, as I have all the notes and it costs me no effort to write it."[1] He worked from 1.30 p.m. to 5 p.m. and again after dinner; and he wrote in serio-comic vein of the difficulties under which he laboured:

> "I dine upstairs at 8.30 p.m., then work and bed about 1 a.m. But then I have a terrifying experience. On one side of me is an Englishman who snores badly. Above me (the floors being very thin) is an elderly Greek, whose snores reverberate through the whole building and almost shake the floors. What with both, I did not sleep for one second last night. I hammered at the wall to stop A., and heard his wife expostulating with him. I then went upstairs at 2.30 a.m. and banged and rattled at the bedroom door of B. He neither awoke nor stopped for an instant. It was like the discharge of artillery, and went on without a pause till 8 a.m."[2]

It was not long, however, before his attention was recalled to the Franco-British controversy. The publication of the British Note of August the 11th caused a good deal of fluttering in quite a number of dovecots. It was recognised in Great Britain as a powerful statement of the case from the British point of view. It was widely spoken of as one of Lord Curzon's masterpieces. The Foreign Secretary was pictured immured at Kedleston Hall in Derbyshire, sitting up far into the night composing it. It is true that Lord Curzon wrote many of the Foreign Office Despatches himself, just as when Viceroy of India he composed and wrote with his own hand many of the more important State Papers. And there can be little doubt that, in years to come, his tenure of the Foreign Secretaryship will

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon.
[2] Letter to Lady Curzon dated August 15th, 1923.

become famous for the remarkable series of rhetorical productions which emanated from the Department over which he presided. But he was not the chief author of the Despatch of August the 11th, 1923. He laid down the main lines on which it was to be written and he gave to it its final polish. "The famous British Note," he told Lady Curzon, "was written by Crowe, and all I did was to tone down some of its worst asperities and curtail and re-write parts that had been badly expressed."[1]

In France it not unnaturally excited a good deal of resentment. "I see the French papers are covering me with abuse over the Note," Lord Curzon wrote from Bagnolles on August the 15th. And it did little at the time to assist towards a settlement. Passive resistance was, however, coming to an end. It actually ceased on September the 26th; and though some weeks were to slip by before any appreciable advance towards a settlement was made, Lord Curzon had the satisfaction before the year was out of seeing the kind of enquiry into the financial state of Germany which he had long urged, actually being undertaken.

[1]Letter dated August 24th, 1923.

CHAPTER XXII

LAST MONTHS: THE CALL OF KEDLESTON

1924–1925

In the British Note of August the 11th, 1923, in which was set forth the attitude of the British Government towards the Franco-German crisis, one of the most striking passages was that in which an epitome was given of the economic burden under which the British people laboured. The statement that since the Armistice the British taxpayer had been compelled to provide so vast a sum as £400,000,000, merely to keep from starvation the army of able-bodied men who were crying for work which no longer existed, brought home dramatically to the public the magnitude of the economic catastrophe which had overtaken Europe. And, bad as the situation was, it seemed likely to become worse rather than better so long as the two chief nations on the continent continued to squander their resources in an exhausting, and, as had long since become apparent to the onlooker, a futile political struggle.

The hopeless disorganisation introduced into the German economic system by the paralysis of one of her most highly developed industrial areas, had had an immediate influence on British foreign trade, while, paradoxically, the fall in the French exchange gave French exporters a striking if temporary advantage in competition with the British manufacturer in his own home market. One million, three hundred and fifty thousand British workmen were without work. To many it seemed that a desperate situation called for desperate remedies. And it was in these circumstances that the Prime Minister made a sudden announcement that, if he was to deal

effectively with a state of affairs which was already alarming and which at any moment might become disastrous, he must be free to employ tariffs for the protection of British industry in the home market. And since he held himself bound by the pledge given by his predecessor not to do so without the authority of the electors, he announced his intention of appealing to the country.

Lord Curzon's enthusiasm for Protection, never great, had dwindled after the General Elections of 1910, in which year a Protectionist programme had twice been rejected by the country. "Of course I agree with you," he had written to Alfred Lyttelton some time afterwards; "I do not believe that with the food taxes we shall ever have a substantial win, and four successive defeats for Tariff Reform will be enough to crush any programme." It is true that the food taxes of Mr. Chamberlain's earlier programme were dropped by Mr. Baldwin; but this did little to reconcile Lord Curzon to the step which was about to be taken. And in his correspondence he made no attempt to disguise his opinion of its unwisdom—

> "We are being involved, as I think, quite unnecessarily and unwisely in a conflict that can only be solved by a General Election. That this can strengthen the Government, I can hardly believe; that it may materially weaken us, is at least probable."[1]

Five days later in a letter to the same correspondent he returned to the subject—

> "Personally I deeply regret and deplore what I regard as a premature and unnecessary dissolution. But the Prime Minister is very confident."[2]

The critical state of affairs on the Continent provided him with a valid excuse for taking no part in the electoral campaign, which resulted, as he had foretold, in materially weakening the Government. "Who can explain acts of political insanity?" he asked in a

[1] Letter to Lord Crewe, dated November 12th, 1923.
[2] *Ibid.*, November 17th, 1923.

MR. BALDWIN AND LORD CURZON

On the eve of the Resignation of the Government, January 1924.

letter to Lord Lamington. "Not I. I did my best to stop it, foreseeing the inevitable and disastrous consequences. I would, indeed, have done very differently."[1]

With the Conservative party now in a minority in the House of Commons, the defeat of the Government was only a question of days. The fatal division took place on January the 21st, and on Wednesday, January the 23rd, 1924, Ministers with seals to hand over were received in audience by the King. "I handed over the seals this morning," Lord Curzon wrote, "and am now *functus officio*."[2]

Thus there passed from the Foreign Office, never to return to it, a man who during five fateful years had held in his hands the manifold threads of British Foreign Policy. Some historian of the future will see in truer perspective the crowded happenings of these tumultuous times, and will thus be in a position to determine with greater assurance than is at present possible the place to which his administration at the Foreign Office entitles him in the long line of distinguished men who have guided the fortunes of their country in her relations, sometimes cordial, at other times cool, at others, again, noisily explosive, with the nations of the world. Lord Curzon himself died a disillusioned and a disappointed man—to those who really understood him, a lonely and an infinitely pathetic figure. Judged by the level of achievement—not in this Office or in that, but in the wider field of public life at large—to which he had persistently aspired, he wrote himself down a failure. History, it may be, will take a different view. For the present the dust of controversy hangs too thick over the scene to admit of dispassionate judgment; and the opinions of to-day, formed at close quarters to the scenes enacted, may well be modified or reversed by the surer judgment of to-morrow. Nevertheless, contemporary opinion has its value, and the attempt to focus it should not be shirked.

Those who watched closely his actual work as Foreign Minister were alternately amazed at his industry and ability and baffled by

[1] Letter dated December 29th, 1923.
[2] Letter to Lord Crewe.

the comparative poverty of the results which they produced. His analysis of a situation was superb; his exposition of it unsurpassed in picturesqueness and lucidity. Yet his advice as to the action to be taken in the circumstances which he had so brilliantly expounded, was strangely indecisive and disappointing. Why so? it will be asked. The answer, I think, is that his whole interest lay in the actual work of analysis and presentation. His mind, with its passion for detail and its tremendous strength for dealing with a multitude of small things simultaneously, delighted in bringing together the factors leading up to a particular situation, arranging them in proper order much as a skilled craftsman would put together the stones of a mosaic, and presenting a picture complete in itself for the inspection of his colleagues. His interest, that is to say, was in the past and in the present rather than in the future; and just as the interest of a man engaged in fitting together the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle comes to an end with the completion of the picture, so did Lord Curzon's interest wane when his case had been presented. It was the same in other matters—in the restoration of a building, for example. His interest lay much more in the actual work of restoration than in the subsequent possession of the renovated edifice. It followed that in the matter of a problem of Foreign Policy his concern with the results of his action was comparatively small; and herein is to be found the explanation of the difficulty which his colleagues in the Cabinet often experienced in persuading him to give a lead.

There is no doubt, too, that he was unfortunate in the circumstances of the time at which he was called upon to take control of the Foreign Policy of the country. The part imposed on him by the conditions of the post-war world was not that which he was best fitted to play. Autocratic by nature, he was never at his best in a position of subordination; and for reasons which have been given in Chapter XVI, the Foreign Minister of post-war Britain found himself subordinate to an unusual degree to the dominant figure of the Prime Minister of the day. Those who knew him as Viceroy of India, where he was supreme within the sphere allotted to him, will be ready enough to believe that, had he himself become Prime Minister, he would have loomed far larger upon the international

stage than as Foreign Minister he actually appeared to do. In the event of his being entrusted with the formation of a Ministry he had, indeed, determined to combine in his own person the two offices of Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, just as in earlier days in England his old Chief, Lord Salisbury, had done ; as, in accordance with Indian administrative practice, he had himself done throughout the seven years of his Viceroyalty ; and as, less than a year later, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald actually did. " I was knocked out," he had explained in a letter to Lord Crewe, written two days after he had learned his fate, " not at all because it was thought impossible that I should combine the two offices of Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary—because I had made up my mind, if invited, to try it at least for a time ; but because the Opposition party in the House of Commons being in the majority a Labour party, the King thought that the Head of the Government must be there to answer them." [1]

There was another respect in which, in the circumstances of the time, he was at some disadvantage. He had not behind him the resources, spiritual or material, which in other days might have justified him as Foreign Secretary in playing a part more in keeping with his nature—the part not so much of a diplomatist as of a dictator. The country was war-weary ; her troops had been disbanded ; she was neither in the mood nor in a position, as Lord Curzon realised only too well, to shout challenges and wave flags. It was to the credit of his discernment that he appreciated from the first the nature of the chasm that separated the post-war from the pre-war world. He was not so quick to realise that he was not himself so well equipped by nature to play the part which the changes wrought—not in Europe only, but throughout the world—imposed upon him. He admitted that the qualities which the British Foreign Minister had now to cultivate were those, not of enterprise and daring, but of endless patience, never-failing equanimity and tact. And he never seems to have doubted that these were qualities of which he himself could boast. It was this belief that blinded him to the feelings which he often excited in the Ambassadors of foreign Powers. " I do not think that either A or B found me difficult to get on with," he wrote in December 1923 to a life-long

[1] Letter dated May 24th, 1923.

friend who had hinted, half in earnest and half in jest, that the parts of schoolmaster and pupil were not wholly applicable in the case of a Foreign Minister and the accredited representatives of foreign Governments. And he added that he did not think that any Ambassador had found him other than easy to get on with—"I have been on very friendly terms with all." Let it be at once admitted that this belief was not well-founded. There was, strongly developed in his moral make-up, a distaste for pretence of any sort which dissuaded him from any attempt to disguise his own feelings, even if he had been capable of doing so. "The proportion of the whole truth that ought to be told in the domain of statecraft," he once wrote, "is a question open to dispute. But at least let me side with those who abhor the diplomatic lie."[1] And even if he had cultivated a taste for *finesse*, he would never have become proficient at the art. For his emotions, always powerful and clamorous for expression, were faithfully reflected through their varying phases in his speech and mien. And in proportion as he spurned subtlety, so was he frank—at times even to the point of rudeness—in giving expression to what was in his mind. He could, indeed, be shatteringly outspoken. And in these days of slow and painful recovery from wounds such as humanity had never before known, when the nerves, not of individuals only, but of nations, were on edge, there were incidents in their relations which might well have stung to anger men far more phlegmatic than Lord Curzon.

Yet even with the times thus out of joint, it may be said with confidence that to the student of some future day Lord Curzon will stand out a great and arresting figure against the shifting background of his age. It may well be that he will seem a little to have outlived his day; that his manner and deportment—even the stately forms of diction which he affected—fitted historically into an earlier setting; that he stood like an island—the lone fragment of a receding continent which had all but passed from view, submerged by the swiftly rising waters of twentieth-century democracy. Yet for this very reason, perhaps, his stately figure, wrapped in the grand manner of a vanishing age, will stand out in sharper outline and will shine with an added splendour as it is viewed down the lengthening flights of

[1] In his Preface to "Persia and the Persian Question."

time. And he will be recognised, if not as a Foreign Minister of outstanding greatness, yet as a great exemplar of a type which has played a memorable part in the history of Great Britain, and above all, as a statesman whose conduct was based on the loftiest conception of international morality and inspired by the highest standard of patriotic duty.

. . . . .

Lord Curzon's life as a Cabinet Minister did not end with his departure from the Foreign Office in January 1924; but with his realisation that the Premiership was forever beyond his grasp, and that the doors of the Foreign Office too were henceforth closed against him, his return to office in the autumn of the year was dictated by considerations other than those of personal inclination. He agreed to join the Government as Lord President of the Council, Leader in the House of Lords and Chairman of the Committee of Imperial Defence; but he did so without enthusiasm. "There is a Council to-morrow morning," he wrote on November the 6th, "at which I shall preside for the first time, as in 1916, as President, and all the new Ministers will be sworn in. How unlike my last experience, when all was new and promising."[1] He had taken part in the Election that had resulted in the return of the Conservative party to power; but he had done so solely from a sense of what was due from one occupying his position in the counsels of the party. "I have agreed to speak at Leicester," he had written in September, "at a big public meeting, on November the 18th, as, though standing or sitting on a platform for two hours is a great trial for me, I must play my part."[2] Any reflections on his work as Foreign Secretary cut him to the quick and added to the distaste with which he now viewed political life:

> "Politics, as we have often remarked, are a dirty game and the mud which others stir seems to settle with an almost malignant monotony on me. As you know, I would never have swallowed what I have done or consented to take office again,

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon.
[2] Letter to Lady Curzon, dated September 16th, 1924.

were it not that you so strongly wished me to do so and that I am always urged, and indeed expected, to do the big thing."[1]

The tone of his letters when writing of those other interests which had always vied with politics for the leading place in his affections, possessed by contrast a profound significance. Only a few days after he had spoken of the trial which platform speaking had become to him, he was writing in a strain of exuberant excitement of a visit to Tattershall Castle :

> " I had a most successful day at Tattershall yesterday, Butler accompanying me. He was ravished with its beauty, as was I. Everything in perfect order and beautifully kept. On our way back we just had time to rush into Lincoln Cathedral, 5 p.m., nearly dark, but a service going on in the choir and the glorious voices of the boys ringing down the vast and lofty nave. It was a thing to be remembered."[2]

Indeed, more and more after the shattering day in May, 1923, did he fall back upon that strange side of his Protean personality which delighted to invest inanimate things with the attributes of life and in particular to envelop piles of masonry in an aroma of rich romance. From the first, Kedleston Hall, standing " in serene beauty on the great stretches of gravel and lawns surrounding it, a silvery-grey mass on an unrelieved plain of grey and green,"[3] as I had occasion to remark in the opening sentences of this biography, had made a deep and abiding impression on George Curzon's young and plastic mind. There was something that appealed instinctively and with a peculiar intimacy to him in the stately lines of the eighteenth-century mansion with its vast and impressive pillared hall, its domed saloon, its curving galleries, its massive fireplaces, its rich cornices and decorative friezes, its beautiful ceilings—the masterpieces of Robert Adam and Angelica Kauffman working in happy and fruitful collaboration—its

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon, dated November 8th, 1924.
[2] *Ibid.*, dated September the 24th, 1924.
[3] Mr. A. S. C. Butler in his " Substance of Architecture," q.v.

Corinthian columns of solid English alabaster and its Doric porticoes.

During the greater part of his life, circumstances carried him far afield; and even after his father's death, in 1916, he continued to live at Hackwood Park; but always in the background of his life Kedleston stood, a great and magnificent reality, a thing of endurance in a world of flux, an imperishable link holding him to the soil on which for eight historic centuries Curzons had been born, had lived and died. Even during the years that he had spent away from her he had thought often of her, pored over such records of her past as he could find, and with diligent and loving care pieced together the details of her story.

It was to Kedleston, the scene of his earliest and tenderest memories, the last resting-place to which, by his desire, all that was mortal of him was taken after his life's close, that he turned in all the crises of his life. And if one seeks evidence of that side of his iridescent character which for the most part lay hidden from the public gaze—his tremendous capacity for devotion, whether to an individual or to an ideal—it is in the ancient Norman church, which for more than eight centuries had stood under the shadow of the successive mansions that had risen and fallen on the site of Kedleston Hall, that one will find it. For it was to Kedleston that he bore the mortal remains of Mary Victoria, first Lady Curzon of Kedleston, in those days of indescribable woe when death snatched her from him; and it was in Kedleston Church that he built the lovely memorial chapel, in the perfecting of which he found an outlet for his immense and imperishable love. In every detail the chapel was his own creation. No obstacle was allowed to stand in the way of his achieving the nearest approach to perfection of which his creative genius might prove capable. The quarries of Derbyshire, of Italy, of Belgium, and even of Russia; the workshops of Rome, London, Venice, Genoa, Spain, Portugal and Mexico were ransacked in his search for what he wanted. The churches of many lands were laid under contribution to provide either the originals, or failing these, the models for the chapel furniture. From Venice he secured silver lamps; from Genoa the crimson velvet altar cloth; from Portugal the crucifix; from Spain the eighteenth-

century candlesticks upon the altar and the carved and painted wooden panels of sixteenth-century work representing the Descent from the Cross and the Adoration ; from Mexico the silver lectern, and from Germany the wrought-iron hanging electrolier. The cathedral at Pavia provided models for bronze candelabra ; the church of Sta. Maria Maggiore at Rome for sculptured panels for the adornment of the walls ; the cathedrals of Spain for the iron grilles shutting off the chapel from the nave of the church. Yet all these provided but the setting for the main feature of the fane—the elaborate monument of marble which it was to enshrine.

In his imagination Lord Curzon had pictured a group of figures sculptured in pure white marble and resting upon a floor of unbroken green. And not until after a quest extending over two years did he succeed in procuring from the Ural mountains a sufficient quantity of the translucent quartz, known as aventurine, to enable him to carry out his scheme. Upon the floor thus carefully prepared now rests what has been described as Sir Bertram Mackennal's masterpiece and one of the supreme artistic achievements of the time, a tomb of white Italian Serravezza marble, on which repose the recumbent figures of Lord and Lady Curzon, over whom bend two angels holding out to them the celestial crown of love.

It was at the suggestion of one of the earliest of his friends[1] that he agreed to his own effigy being laid, while he still lived, beside that of his dead wife, giving as the reason for his consent the tragic truth that with her death his own youth had perished also.

Out of the bottomless depths of his grief and his devotion he drew the words which he caused to be graven on the tomb. On one side is the affirmation of his love :

M. V. C.
QUI JAMPRIDEM AMABAT
HODIE AMAT
CRAS AMABIT
IN AETERNUM AMANDAM
G. N. C.

And on the other, a verse from that poem which all through his

[1] Violet, Duchess of Rutland.

MEMORIAL CHAPEL AND MONUMENT
(erected by Lord Curzon at Kedleston.)

life had lingered in his memory, the " Blessed Damozel " of D. G. Rossetti, in which he read her answer to his own fervid protestation :

" There will I ask of Christ the Lord
Thus much for him and me
Only to live as once on earth
With love, only to be
As then awhile, for ever now
Together, I and he."

No one who has once set foot across the threshold of what must surely be one of the most perfect private memorial chapels in existence, can fail reverently to bow his head in recognition of love so great and of so fine a texture. One glimpse of this, the love offering of his ardent soul—could the public but have it—would shatter for ever the popular myth of George Curzon as the cold and pompous hero of the notorious college rhyme.

And now, when so far as his public career was concerned, the golden bowl seemed broken, it was to Kedleston that he turned for solace, and it was in his plans for the renovation of the mansion that he found the interest and the occupation without which life for him became an empty and meaningless dream. In 1926 his lease of Hackwood would run out, and for some time past he had been planning such alterations at Kedleston as would enable him to move into a modernised mansion in that year. " I have done a lot while here," he wrote in 1919, " in clearing out old books, arranging the library, getting old furniture mended and making plans for the alteration of the house." [1]

Concurrently with his preparations for introducing into the interior of the house every possible modern convenience, he was engaged on the collection of material for histories of the house, the church, the family and the estate. " I have, I think, examined every scrap of paper or item of evidence that has been left at Kedleston and have filled many lacunæ by independent research." Thus he wrote in his introduction to the series of which one volume only—that on Kedleston Church—was completed and printed for private

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon.

circulation before he died. Here once again, as so often before, he indulged his passion for reconstructing the past, for breathing the breath of life into that from which it had ebbed away, for " making these dry bones live." And as he did so, he made clear something of the veneration with which he regarded the ancient social order that sprang from feudal England. Something more than a purely local or personal interest clung to records of the families, churches and houses of Great Britain, since they constituted a fragment of the domestic history of the country, reproducing on a small stage the effects and movements of the outer world :

> " Son succeeds father for generation after generation ; he retains, or adds to, or diminishes the patrimony of his ancestors ; he builds or rebuilds or alters the family mansion ; he takes part in the public life of his country ; he discharges according to his lights his duty towards his neighbours and dependents—and the picture presented, though miniature in scale, is a microcosm of the larger life of the community whose evolution it assists to illustrate. It may even have a personality in which the more spacious canvas of the historian is wanting."

And of greater assistance in the task of reconstruction than the musty manuscripts of the muniment room themselves were the actual buildings :

> " Buildings where they have escaped the perils of fire, restoration, or other dangers, are documents at once more vivid and more valuable, since they carry their history all but indelibly written on their face. Particularly is this true of churches where the history of the past can often be recovered with an almost microscopic fidelity from the architecture, and where sculptured effigies faithfully delineate the features, dress and style of successive epochs." [1]

For some time past, indeed, he had been preparing for a possible day when public affairs might no longer claim him. A vision of life

[1] Introduction to the series of Monographs on Kedleston.

at Kedleston, amid whose peaceful surroundings he might spend long, joyous hours plying his pen, not on official Memoranda and Despatches, but on those many other subjects which he loved, was one which grew in attractiveness as the years wore on.

> "When I have closed the Foreign Office bag," he wrote one day in September, 1921, "I will go and stroll round the pleasure ground and will endeavour to get some peace on this lovely September evening. I have never seen a more lovely autumn. Every evening sunlit, still, quite soundless—the sort of unbroken peace that precedes the beginning of decay. How you would love it, or rather, I would love it the more with you. You will see great improvements when you come here, but it will take me the full four years to get things right."[1]

Amid these surroundings the drone of the daily drudgery of Whitehall sounded infinitely far off; and peculiarly susceptible, as always, to the influence of his environment, peace fell gently upon his restless spirit. One thing only was wanted to give him real happiness—the presence of the sympathetic and well-loved companionship upon which he leaned so heavily in these later and lonely days.

> "I do so regret that you have had no share in this amazing autumn here. I have never known anything like it; fog or mist in the morning, but after this has lifted about 10.30 a.m. the most wonderfully pearly air and mellow sunlight, Nature resting in a still trance and parading her exquisite beauties before she sinks into decay. It is with anguish that on Sunday night or Monday I tear myself away."[2]

The beauty of Nature was a never failing source of wonder; and two years later to a day he was describing, in almost identical language, the effect that autumn days at Kedleston had upon him:

> "To-day has been positively divine; and now at 7.15 p.m. there is that wonderful stillness in the air—an almost unearthly

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon, dated September the 7th, 1921.
[2] *Ibid.*, dated October 16th, 1921.

radiance that I used to describe to you at Schwalbach in the same month two years ago." [1]

How he revelled in the planning and not least in the doing—as far as possible with his own hands—of the improvements that kept forming in his mind. " I am planning everything out so that when we move from Hackwood in a little over four years time, everything may move naturally into its place here." [2]

And how he relished other people's lack of efficiency as a foil against which to parade his own :

> " As the Park keeper would not take the weed off the water, nor keep the boat-house clean, nor keep the grass cut in front of it, I went into Derby myself and bought a scythe, a pair of clippers, a rake and a broom. Now he has no excuse." [3]

The claims of Whitehall interfered grievously with these activities. " I shall be back in London Tuesday night and in the full tide of work—Cabinets, etc., on Wednesday.. How detestable. But I shall try to get down here for Sunday." [4] In September 1923 he was even more emphatic.

> " On Monday I have to go to town for Cabinets and the autumn work which is now beginning. I look forward to it with horror." [5]

As his passion for politics burned itself out, his passion for Kedleston grew. " Politics are a sorry game," he wrote in a letter to Lady Curzon on February the 3rd, 1924, " and your difficulty will be to keep me in them at all." And the next day—" Just a line after a hard day in the garden."

During the last eighteen months of his life he seldom missed a week-end there. He had found an architect after his own heart—one who was prepared to put himself unreservedly at his disposal, to

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon, dated September 6th, 1923.
[2] *Ibid.*, dated September 11th, 1921.
[3] *Ibid.*, dated September 7th, 1921.
[4] *Ibid.*, dated October 2nd, 1921.
[5] *Ibid.*, dated September 20th, 1923.

THE GREAT PILLARED HALL AT KEDLESTON

By courtesy of Country Life.

enter into his enthusiasms, to humour him in his whims. It was not always easy. Lord Curzon wanted to do everything himself. A plan for a garden improvement nearly led to a rupture in this strange partnership. "*Must* we both draw it?" the expert asked in accents almost of despair.

It was late one night in October 1923 when Lord Curzon welcomed his future collaborator at Kedleston. At 11.30 p.m. he began showing him the building and he did not desist until 1 a.m. The main object of the alterations was to modernise the house for his life there with Lady Curzon after the year 1926, when he would be free of Hackwood. "I can make the place one that you will be proud of, and fond of too," he told her. It was to be a supreme example of what a nobleman's residence should be, and, stoically though Lord Curzon himself lived, his sense of hospitality and his natural aptitude for doing things on a grand scale impelled him to undertake a vast scheme of renovation. The fifteen bathrooms that he considered necessary involved four and a half miles of piping—the total quantity of pipes put in for all purposes was nearly double this—and the scheme of lighting and telephones, sixteen miles of electric wiring. During the autumn and winter of 1924-25 he spent hours in the cold and the wet, moving about in a sea of mud, planning and supervising improvements in the grounds. "An awful hard day here indoors and out of doors," he wrote on September the 19th, "but things progressing." And a month later—"I have had a hard afternoon down in the bottom wood seeing about the Lily Pond and marking the trees to be cut down to give light. This morning we were experimenting with the Pergola."[1]

His feeling towards the actual fabric of the building was extraordinary; it amounted almost to a passion. He would fondle the great columns of glimmering alabaster as if they were the arms of a beautiful and well-loved woman. And the natural beauty of the surroundings struck somewhere deep down in his being a delicately responsive chord. "To-day, he wrote in October 1921, "I thought I had rarely seen such a dream of beauty as the view from your new garden."[2] Amid such surroundings, away from the bustle of life

[1]Letter to Lady Curzon, dated October the 17th, 1924.
[2]Letter to Lady Curzon.

whose lure he could not resist when in contact with it, he was almost happy—if, that is to say, true happiness may be defined as spiritual contentment.

At the end of February 1925, he was spending the week-end as usual, planning and directing operations, when he became unwell. Reconstruction was in full swing and scarcely a room in the house was habitable. Lord Curzon retired to bed, therefore, in the great state bedroom where—because he refused to allow the introduction of radiators into this apartment—he lay wearing an overcoat and gloves under the large Adam canopy, covered with a blue silk counterpane, reading a magazine. Though he had no sort of idea of it, he was not again to see Kedleston alive.

He was so accustomed to bodily infirmity that he thought little of what he imagined was a passing indisposition, and a week later he proceeded to Cambridge to fulfil a public engagement. While dressing for dinner he was seized with an attack of illness which necessitated the summoning of a surgeon. On the following day he was taken by Lady Curzon to London, and an operation was decided on. He seems to have had no premonition of impending doom, for on March the 8th, the day before the operation, he wrote in reply to a letter of sympathy from the Prime Minister—" I am not in the least afraid of the operation and I am sure I shall get through alright. And, with a touch of that charm of manner which, on occasion, he knew so well how to employ, he added :

> " Let me congratulate you on your wonderful speech. It was a sure instinct that persuaded you to make it ; and the reception it met with must be as welcome to you as it was delightful to your colleagues."

The public were equally unprepared for the fatal termination of his illness which came on the morning of March the 20th, for the daily bulletins, as was admitted later in the House of Lords, had all along rather understated than overestimated the seriousness of his condition, in the expectation that the patient would insist on seeing them. He might indeed, have lived but for his own impetuosity and intolerance of restraint. But with his small reserves of strength

dangerously sapped by hæmorrhage, he still insisted on burdening his hours of consciousness with work, drafting directions to his Executors and giving careful attention, among other things, to a scheme for developing the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, to which he had been appointed at the suggestion of Mr. L. H. Cust, an old friend and contemporary at Eton, into something of greater national importance.

News of Lord Curzon's death wrought a revolution in the public estimate of him. " Rarely," wrote one who had known him long, " can Death have vindicated its appropriate office so completely, so conspicuously and so swiftly as in the case of Lord Curzon of Kedleston." [1] Twenty years before, in India, public opinion had suddenly recognised with instinctive insight the greatness of his Viceroyalty. The shock of the catastrophe which had brought it to a close had smitten the scales from men's eyes so that they saw with the unclouded vision of spectators from afar the structure of all that he had wrought, whole and in extraordinarily true perspective. Now, once more, the shock of his death cleared men's eyes. Misrepresentation and criticism, amounting often to abuse, died suddenly ; and in their place appeared generous estimates of his character and achievements and swift recognition of the loss which the country had sustained. Messages of sympathy poured in from Crowned Heads and the Governments of the Kingdoms and States of Europe, Asia and the Americas. King George proved a true interpreter of the public mind when, speaking of him as " an old and valued friend ;" he added that the Nation would mourn the loss of a foremost statesman and would ever gratefully remember the brilliant and manifold services which he had rendered under three Sovereigns. The tremendous range of his interests and activities was focussed by tributes from institutions of all kinds and from individuals in every walk of life. " A tragic satisfaction," as Harold Nicolson wrote, " to record this posthumous understanding of a man who imagined always that he was misunderstood." [2]

On March the 25th, in the presence of a great gathering of mourners representing statecraft and diplomacy and all the many

[1] Sir J. A. R. Marriott, in the *Fortnightly Review* for May, 1925.
[2] In *The Spectator* of April 4th, 1925.

interests of the great world in which for more than forty years Lord Curzon had been a familiar and an arresting figure, the first part of the funeral service was read in Westminster Abbey. From the Abbey the coffin was conveyed the same evening to Kedleston, where it lay in state in the great pillared hall until the following day. Lord Curzon himself could have wished for no more fitting home-coming. From the town of Derby, where flags flew at half-mast and silent crowds and shuttered windows told their tale of mourning, the cortège passed on to Kedleston, bearing all that was mortal of him into the keeping of his own people. There in their midst on March the 26th he was laid finally to rest, borne on the shoulders of the estate tenantry from the solemn and moving service in the central hall of the cherished home whence he had gone forth in the morning of his earthly journey and to which he had returned in the waning light of evening, to the quiet of the ancient church which carried down the centuries the memories and traditions of generations of his race. Here was not the pomp and panoply of the outer world—rather the quiet simplicity, the happy intimacy of domestic England. He would not himself have had it otherwise. "We lay her to rest peacefully, no show. This is as she would have wished," he had written of the burial of Mary Victoria, first Lady Curzon of Kedleston. And now he lies at rest himself, beside her in the family vault beneath the lovely Memorial Chapel which he had spent so much time and thought in erecting and adorning.

Upon a tablet to his memory has been graven by loving hands this epitaph:

In divers offices and in many lands
As Explorer, Writer, Administrator and Ruler of men
He sought to serve his Country
And add honour to an ancient name.

EPILOGUE

CERTAIN reflections of no little human interest are prompted by a consideration of Lord Curzon's life—reflections, therefore, which it may not be thought inappropriate to set down here in the form of an epilogue to the story of the life itself.

No one can read the chapters of these volumes in which the story of Lord Curzon's life and work is told, without perceiving written across them, as clearly as in an actual palimpsest, both the triumphs and the tragedy of a magnificent but all too consuming passion. It is, indeed, impossible to withhold admiration from industry so great, pursued with so remorseless and indomitable a determination. Yet some there will undoubtedly be who, as they contemplate its less fortunate consequences—notably the disastrous physical and mental strain which it imposed upon him—will be hard put to it to decide whether most to applaud or to deprecate the vast and breathless activity of his days, his insatiable greed for work, his ceaseless striving and reaching after accomplishment, his loud and exultant yea-saying to life. For one cannot refrain from speculating whether his performances, great though they unquestionably were, might not have been even greater had he been capable of recognising the essential wisdom of the golden mean. "What do you think," asked the Lord Buddha of one who played upon a lute, "if the strings of your lute are too tightly strung, will the lute give out the proper tone and be fit to play? Or, if the strings of your lute be strung too slack, will the lute then give out the proper tone and be fit to play?" And on receiving the answer: "But how if the strings of your lute be not strung too tight nor too loose, if they have the proper degree of tension, will the lute then give out the proper sound and be fit to play?" The lute player assented and

received this exhortation: "In the same way energy too much strained tends to excessive zeal, and energy too much relaxed tends to apathy. Therefore cultivate in yourself the mean." It is a parable upon whose moral Lord Curzon might have meditated with advantage.

Others there will be to whom, as they ponder upon the stress and turmoil of so strenuous an existence, will occur the question—to what end? The question has a personal and a more general aspect. Of the latter little need now be said, for the answer is writ large over the pages of these volumes and may be summed up succinctly in a sentence—to the end that he might serve his fellow men. Service to this cause or to that; the cause of learning or of art; service to the cause of human progress generally; and more particularly service to the State. This was the end to which Lord Curzon lived and wrought. And no more fitting tribute could be paid to him than that to which King Edward VII gave expression when he spoke of him as "a great public servant."

But what of the personal aspect of the question? Was it along this road that happiness lay? Some will say yea and others will say nay. To those whose ideal of happiness lies enshrined in the peaceful quietism of so much of the philosophic teaching of the East, his life can only wear the appearance of a phantasmagoria of unending horror—the life of all lives most diligently to be avoided.

> "Each day the thought recurs to me," wrote such an one from the placid reaches of an Indian river, "shall I be reborn under this star-spangled sky? Will the peaceful rapture of such wonderful evenings ever again be mine, on this silent Bengal river, in so secluded a corner of the world? Perhaps not . . My greatest fear is lest I should be reborn in Europe. For there one cannot recline like this with one's whole being laid open to the infinite above—one is liable, I am afraid, to be soundly rated for lying down at all. Like the roads there, one's mind has to be stone-metalled for heavy traffic—geometrically laid out and kept clear and regulated."[1]

[1] From a letter written by Dr. Rabindranath Tagore to a friend, on May 16th, 1893, and afterwards published in a collection of letters entitled "Glimpses of Bengal."

It may likewise be recalled that, in the language of Buddhist metaphysics, there is a word *Upadana*, which signifies a tenacious clinging to life and all its manifold activities—a supreme expression of the will to live. It is one of the twelve *nidanas*—the twelve links, that is to say, in the iron chain of causation which binds a man inexorably to the ever-revolving cycle of existence—birth, old age, death and rebirth. It is, consequently, according to the Buddhist view of things, one of the chief obstacles to true happiness—to the attainment of Nirvana, the *summum bonum* of so many of the systems which have sprung from the immemorial musings of the meditative East. It is plainly a characteristic which Lord Curzon possessed in full, and in what to the Buddhist would appear to be altogether calamitous measure. This school of thought, however, is one which has little vogue among Western peoples, who are prone to see in creative work the most hopeful source of human happiness and who will give a different answer, consequently, to the question which has suggested these observations. The question itself, moreover, is one which, so far as Lord Curzon is concerned, is a little beside the point; for with all his love of life he was no hedonist, and he never deliberately set happiness before himself as the goal of life. Happiness, if it came his way, was a mere by-product of the life process and not an end of that process in itself. The goal at which he ever aimed can be described compendiously as achievement—the bringing of things to a conclusion, the multiplication and the accumulation of bundles of acts of accomplishment, across whose respective dockets might be written with a flourish of satisfaction, *res gestae*. He was driven on relentlessly by some inward urge to place his hand to one thing after another; and if it be asked what was the nature of this remorseless impulsion to labour, the answer suggested by all that has here been written of him would seem to be that it varied with the changing moods of the labourer himself. At its lowest it may have been a mere desire to gratify ambition; at its highest it was beyond all question an altruistic desire to render service. But whatever its nature it was always there. "I am doing no work," he wrote from the beautiful villa of Lou Sueil, which looks down from the heights above Eze in the south of France, on January the 22nd, 1925, "for the first time in my life, having brought none to do." Not for

long was enjoyment of this unique experience permitted by the sleepless slave-driver within, and a week later he wrote from the same place—" In the long hours that I spend in my room here I have been compiling the index for my work on India, which is a very laborious task and one for which I should hardly have found time in London."[1]

But his industry though the most obvious, perhaps, was not from a psychological point of view the most striking of his characteristics. What gave to his personality its peculiar interest was its amazing contradictions and perversities. What more perplexing paradox could be imagined than that presented by the pomposity and the simplicity, the aloofness and the sociability, the broad-mindedness and the intolerance, the generosity and the pettiness, the exuberant affections and the implacable hates, the contemptuous arrogance and the strange humbleness of heart of this incalculable man ? How many, even of those who were his friends, would have credited him with the humility displayed in his surprising admission of the superiority of the Durbar held at Delhi in 1911, to the ceremony which he had himself planned and carried through with so much success in 1903 ? " The Durbar itself," he wrote when congratulating Sir J. P. Hewett on his organising ability, " must have been ten times finer than mine, and I should like to have seen it."[2] Or again in his acceptance of defeat in the Final Examination at Oxford when he wrote :

> " In the eyes of the world, no doubt, I shall be knocked down several pegs—or what is more probable, I shall be confirmed in the position of sober mediocrity to which many have, on the whole rightly, consigned me."[3]

Among his many and diverse activities there was not one in which he was not liable at any moment to astonish and confound by the display of some startling inconsistency. If his style in both speech and writing was characterised by a natural tendency towards floridity, it was nevertheless marked for the most part by an impressive earnest-

[1]Letters to Lady Curzon.
[2]Letter dated February 25th, 1912.
[3]Letter to Dr. E. S. Talbot, Warden of Keble College and afterwards Bishop of Winchester, dated July 20th, 1882.

ness and often by a dignity and grace reflecting a highly cultured and distinguished mind. It could rise to moving heights of eloquence ; yet it was not incapable of glaring solecisms and of plunging headlong in catastrophic descent from the sublime to the ridiculous. In conversation he could astound his listeners by the rapidity with which he was apt to pass from the language of serious intercourse to the idiom of the tavern ; from an epigrammatic subtlety to sallies of an almost Paphian humour.

Ample evidence is to be found in the pages of these volumes of Lord Curzon's tremendous capacity for devotion. For both men and women he was capable of feelings of deep affection ; so much so that news of the death of a well-loved friend would react upon him with all the force of a physical blow. " The mind reels before a tragedy so blind in its happening," he wrote on learning that Alfred Lyttelton was dead, " so inexplicable in its significance, so paralysing in its effect. . . The column broken, the thread snapped, the bright light extinguished—no image or metaphor is adequate to describe the awful abruptness of the shock ; no words can do justice to the pathos of the situation." [1] Such tragedies drew from him expressions of his sense of loss which sometimes astonished even those who knew him well. " I am most grateful to George Wyndham and the beloved Alfred," wrote a friend after reading George Curzon's appreciations of them, " for having from their respective graves lifted the curtain which hid your real self from the world—for I do not envy anyone who can read your two appreciations without his heart going out to you." [2]

The tributes which appeared over the initial " C " to George Wyndham and Alfred Lyttelton in *The Times* of June the 10th and July the 7th, 1913, respectively, did, indeed, reveal a heart suffused with a great tenderness and rent with passionate grief. Writing on the day on which it appeared, Sir Edmund Gosse described the former as " exquisite," an offering of the heart " wrapped in the purple of a pure Virgilian grace." And he added—" Forgive my intrusion ; your words have moved me deeply by their beauty and their pathos." From another quarter Lord Curzon received striking

[1] In *The Times* of July 7th, 1913.
[2] Letter from the late Earl Grey, July 9th, 1913.

testimony to the effect produced on men's minds by his appreciation of Alfred Lyttelton :

> " You have poured into it all the glow of your heart's friendship and sorrow, and given them such a vehicle as one might almost imagine carrying into the permanence of literature his personality and your grief. . . It is unforgettable that you have felt and spoken so." [1]

Few, indeed, could read the closing passage of his tribute to Alfred Lyttelton without being convinced that here was the outpouring of a heart too full to contain the feelings of affection and sorrow that surged within :

> " All will remember his endearing manner that seemed almost to partake of the nature of a caress, and was equally captivating to age and youth, to high and low, to women and to men. They will see again the sparkle of his merry eye and hear the shout of his joyous laughter. They will picture once more the virile grace of his figure, loosely knit, but eloquent of sinews and muscles well attuned, his expressive gestures and swinging gait. They will measure the quality of his mind, moderate and well-balanced in its inclinations, emphatic but not censorious in its judgments. They will think of his high and unselfish character and of his honourable and stainless life ; and as he passes into the land of silence and becomes a shadow among shadows, they will reflect with a life-long pride that they knew and loved this glorious living thing while he shed a light as of sunbeams and uttered a note as of the skylark in a world of mystery, half gladness and half tears."

But while it is plain beyond dispute that George Curzon was capable of great affection, it must equally be admitted that he could be moved to displays of violent and implacable hate. He could be ruthless in his animosity. There seemed to be a danger zone in his

[1] Letter from the Rt. Rev. E. S. Talbot, D.D., Bishop of Winchester, dated July 7th, 1913.

feelings beyond which it was unsafe to go. If he was hurt beyond a given point by anything said or done, no matter by whom, he could neither forget nor would he forgive. He would simply wipe the offender completely and for ever from his life.

He showed similar divergences in his attitude towards his subordinates. He could be altogether charming, displaying a fine courtesy and a captivating consideration. The tribute paid to him on this score by one who worked in association with him in his early prime, has been mentioned in volume I ;[1] and an officer,[2] who served under him in India, has asserted that on occasions he could show gentler feeling and warmer consideration than most women, and that there was no man outside his own family for whom he himself entertained greater affection. Equally striking is the testimony borne by Sir Walter Lawrence at the close of five years of uninterrupted service as his Private Secretary—"What has most endeared him to me, and has won my affection and absolute devotion, has been his invariable consideration."[3] But he could also be, of all men, the most cavalier in his treatment of those who excited his antipathy, and, if permitted to do so, he would pursue the victim of his disfavour almost to the point of persecution.

Oddly enough, as against a lack of consideration for those who served him, which at times was almost incredible, must be set an extraordinary fellow-feeling for the world at large. Strewn over the countries, not of one continent only but of both hemispheres, there must exist countless letters conveying to friends, and even to casual acquaintances, congratulations and good wishes on occasions for rejoicing and touching expressions of sympathy at times of sorrow. Nor were such missives, written as they invariably were in his own hand, mere perfunctory professions of pleasure or regret, even though the occasion might be no more than the birthday of a friend. Many such have come before me, bearing witness both to the astonishing ramifications of his personal correspondence and to the depth of the emotional reservoir upon which he so constantly drew. On occasions of solemnity they would be marked by passages of

[1] By Sir H. Bergne. See Vol. I. chapter XX, page 305.
[2] Sir F. Younghusband, K.C.S.I. See his "Light of Experience."
[3] Speech at Simla in October, 1903.

exquisite feeling. Of Lord Sandhurst, with whom he had not always worked in complete harmony in India, he wrote :

> " His profound natural courtesy, his chivalry of character and his inflexible devotion to the highest standard of duty, endeared him to all who had the good fortune to work with him ; and whether one was thrown in contact with him as a colleague in Indian Administration, a Court Official, or a fellow member of the Government on the bench, one could not fail both to respect and to love. Would that more men set so splendid an example both of character and conduct." [1]

To persons with whom he was brought into contact in the course of his public activities, whether political or other, he could display a similar consideration. To Sir R. Hermon Hodge, afterwards Lord Wyfold, he wrote on January the 3rd, 1915, a letter of warm-hearted sympathy :

> " I read in the papers that you have nobly given one of your sons to your country. No man living is less likely to rebel at this sacrifice than yourself, though no Father living is more certain to mourn the loss. Thank God you have other sons who, I hope, may be spared to you to perpetuate a gallant name. Meanwhile you have the heartfelt but admiring sympathy of —etc."

Hence the extraordinary variation in the estimates formed of him ; for with his bewildering diversities he both fascinated and affronted, attracted and repelled.

His vitality was such that when he exerted himself to please, he produced an effect that was almost physical in its reaction. As one for whom George Curzon entertained feelings of warm regard, once said to me—" if you chanced to run across him in the street, he seemed to leap to meet you." Yet for all his ebullient animal spirits, which in his earlier days, at any rate, rendered him a familiar and congenial figure in the midst of the most festive company, he

[1] Letter to Lady Sandhurst, November 3rd, 1921.

was peculiarly sensitive to, and appreciative of, the presence of those rare spirits who seem to dwell in an atmosphere of spiritual refinement above the normal human plane. His admiration for, and his happy friendship with, Laura Tennant, afterwards Mrs. Alfred Lyttelton, has been referred to in the earliest of these volumes. After her death he spoke of her as " one of those ethereal emanations that sometimes flash for a moment from the unseen and disappear again into it, leaving a sense of wonder and enchantment that till the end of life creates a thrill in the heart of everyone who beheld the spectacle."[1]

What, then, is the explanation of these strange vagaries—these abrupt and startling contradictions ? The answer to the question seems to me to be implicit in the pages of his biography. George Curzon with his highly strung nervous system was influenced to a quite unusual extent by his environment. He could no more help responding to stimulus from without than the seismograph can help recording the smallest tremor in the earth's surface. The more sensitive the instrument the more immediate and complete its response. And there can be little doubt, surely, that in this extraordinary sensitiveness to his surroundings, psychical as well as physical, which it is impossible wholly to dissociate from the nervous affection of the spine from which he suffered throughout his life, is to be found the cause of so much that was baffling in his complex and effervescent personality.

Indeed, when once this is realised, it is not so much his instabilities and extravagances that call for explanation, as the fact that in all the major concerns of life he displayed so great a steadfastness of purpose and steered from first to last so straight a course. But for some powerful controlling influence, one might not unnaturally expect a human being so constituted to drift impotently through life ; the hapless victim of forces he was powerless to control—a rudderless bark tossed hither and thither on a tempestuous sea of circumstance —brilliant, perhaps, in thought and deed, but fickle of purpose and hopelessly unstable in action. George Curzon was spared that fate because the guiding force was there—the simple but very real religious faith of which mention has more than once been made.

[1] In the course of his appreciation of Alfred Lyttelton in *The Times* of July 7th, 1913.

It was this that enabled him to acquire control of his sensitive physical and mental mechanism. It was the source of an immense earnestness which had in it something of the fanatic, and which was in its turn the basis of so much of his success. "George Curzon," declared one who knew him well, "is the only man I know who could make a speech in his pyjamas without looking ridiculous." The occasion was a day in the summer of 1904 on which Lord Curzon, chained to his bed by illness, had been descanting upon the supreme necessity of British administration in India being founded on the most rigid conception of justice towards the people of the land.

Brought up though he had been in the strict tenets of the Christian church, he found himself unable, while yet comparatively young, to accept the essentials of the Christian creed. It is uncertain when exactly the full realisation of this intellectual revolt against the miraculous in the Christian doctrine flooded in upon him; but no one who reflects upon the self-examination to which he subjected himself as a result of his visit to the Holy Land, referred to in Chapter IV of Volume I, can doubt, in spite of his vehement protestation at the time, that it was then that the corroding acid of scepticism first bit into his mind. His full and busy life left him little leisure for abstract speculation; but he could not dispossess himself of the desire, when once it had been awakened, to find an answer to the questions which scepticism prompted—questions concerning the "How" and the "Why" of the Universe, the "Whence" and the "Whither" of Man? His questionings led him to no very definite conclusions; but they defined and strengthened the simple basic faith which accompanied him through life—that the Universe was an expression of divine purpose, and that Man, for all his insignificance and seeming impotence, was a vital element in an inscrutable but Divinely ordained plan. It was this ever present conviction that gave to his work in India its special character and that lifted it on to so high a plane. It is not without significance that more than one of his speeches made at that period of his life were singled out, by different persons at different times, as breathing so lofty a spirit of morality and patriotism as to render desirable their employment as texts in the schools of Great Britain—a fact which afforded him

peculiar pleasure. "I can only attribute my exceptional good fortune," he wrote in reply to a correspondent who urged the distribution of one of his speeches, "to the fact that each of these speeches represented a burning conviction implanted in me by years of study, and fortified by the belief that a mission and a duty have been entrusted to my countrymen from on high."[1]

That it was this belief that lay at the root of his Imperialistic creed he made abundantly clear on many occasions, and, notably, in the course of a speech delivered at Birmingham in December 1907. Taking as his text "The true Imperialism," he spoke as one who, "by the accident of events, had been called upon to spend the whole of his working manhood in the study or the service of Empire, and to whom it had come to be a secular religion, embodying the most sacred duty of the present and the brightest hope for the future." He painted a graphic picture of the material loss which any dismemberment of the British Empire must inflict on the British people. But it was on the moral loss that he laid the greatest stress. "As for the priceless asset of the national character, without a world to conquer or a duty to perform, it would rot to atrophy and inanition." He denied altogether that Imperialism was a synonym for Jingoism, or Chauvinism or Militarism. It stood for the spirit in which the problem of Empire was handled; and that spirit involved a conviction, a policy and a hope. The conviction was a firm belief that the Empire was "a pre-ordained dispensation, intended to be a source of strength and discipline to ourselves and of moral and material blessing to others."

The policy was equally clear—it was the gradual welding of a number of loosely knit constituent parts into a great World-State; and to Imperialism alone of the many schools of political thought could they look to satisfy the needs and to hold together the framework of the British Dominion. But if it was to play this part, Imperialism must be animated by "the supreme idea without which it is only as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal; namely, the sense of sacrifice and the idea of duty." Except it be built up on a moral basis Empire must sink and crumble to decay. But true Imperialism

[1] Letter to Mr. E. H. Blakeney, dated March 2nd, 1906.

was a lofty and inspiring creed ; and to any who doubted he would say :

> " From the sordid controversies and the sometimes depressing gloom of our insular existence, look forth ; and, if the summons comes to you, go forth into the larger fields of Empire where duty still calls and an illimitable horizon opens. Preserve with faithful attachment the acquisitions of our forefathers ; not tabulating them with vulgar pride, but accepting the legacy with reverence and holding no sacrifice too great to maintain it. Be sure that in our national character, if we can keep it high and undefiled, still lies our national strength. Count it no shame to acknowledge our Empire Mission, but on the contrary the greatest disgrace to be untrue to it ; and, even if God no longer thunders from Sinai and his oracles are sometimes reported dumb, cling humbly but fervently to the belief that, so long as we are worthy, we may still remain one of the instruments through which He chooses to speak to mankind."

He could not understand anyone believing that man was the hapless victim of blind chance. Thus, in reply to a cry of despair from a beloved friend at a time of great anguish, he wrote :

> " The only other thing I deprecate is your saying that you have lost all faith. Faith in what ? Why the only thing in which we firmly and finally believe is not in each other, nor in Christ, nor in Christianity, nor religion, nor philosophy, but in the God that is somewhere behind them all. You do not believe in him the less for this tragedy. Nay, it is so savagely inscrutable that it almost makes one believe the more ; since lurking somewhere there must have been some motive or reason, imperceptible to us, but in some degree or other ordained." [1]

Twenty years later his faith was the same, and he defined it in similar though rather more elaborate terms :

[1] Letter to Violet, Duchess of Rutland, at the time of the death of her eldest son, dated January 10th, 1895.

"What is the common thing in all religions that appeals to all of us?" he asked in a letter to a friend. "I suppose the existence of an all-pervading, all-powerful Spirit (for want of a better word) which must have created the starry Heavens, made the miracle of Nature and the even greater miracle of man—and had an object, however inscrutable, in doing all this—which implanted in man, as distinct from animals, the sense of right and wrong and taught him to dream of a life everlasting."

But there was a strain of rigid rationalism in his nature which rejected the distinctive doctrines of all systematised creeds:

"To such a conception (i.e., that of an omnipotent and omnipresent God) all creeds, dogmas and formulas are subordinate; in its light, sacraments and ceremonies become mere forms; the so-called Holy Scriptures a highly idealised branch of human literature. Jesus Christ takes his place alongside of Buddha as the preacher of a rare and sublimated ethics and as the type of a perfect humanity."

But while this uncrystallised Theism sufficed for himself and, indeed, was as far as his powers of belief were capable of carrying him, he realised that it must prove inadequate to the bulk of the religiously minded:

"The weakness of the theory seems to be in its application to ordinary people who are always looking for a Voice from on High. Through whom, then, does God speak to man? If Jesus Christ was only a Nazarite Socrates, if Moses was no more than Confucius, Isaiah an earlier Savonarola, Saint Paul a forerunner of Martin Luther, where are the oracles of the Almighty to be heard? How are people to worship? What authority and where written are they to obey?"

His difficulty in finding an answer to this question led him to the conclusion that the truth enshrined in the religions of mankind was relative and not absolute; that religion must necessarily take a

form suited to the temperament and stage of development of the worshipper. For those for whom the " Ethical Theism " which he himself professed was insufficient, there must be the religion of the mass of worshippers in all countries—of the vast army of the devout who demanded :

> " Miracles, prophecies, the Son of God incarnate, the Saviour hanging on the Cross, images, processions, intercessions, prayers, oblations, and perhaps the extra spice of a Heaven and a Hell." [1]

From the point of view of the influence which it exerted upon him, however, it is not so much the particular form of belief which he professed that is important, as the deep and unalterable conviction with which the belief itself was held. " Though my views about religion are not very orthodox," he told Lord Roberts, " I am a firm believer both in the duty and efficacy of prayer, and I do not think I have ever missed a day in my life myself." [2] It was this unfailing source of spiritual aid that enabled him in all the difficulties and trials of life—and how many and grievous they were—to be of high courage and to keep his eyes lifted to the stars. From India he once wrote to a friend and companion of those full and glorious days whose lighter hours had sparkled with the high spirits and resounded with the laughter of a band of joyous comrades :

> " All sorts of clouds seem to roll up between the present and the dim delightful past. Where are those days gone? Gone, burned, only a faded memory—but an eternal spell. Next summer I am going home to see if I am remembered and to save myself from dying here. Will anyone know me or care for me? Or shall I find a grey-haired company trudging with myself to a common end? . . . I, at times, suffer terribly from my back and one day it will finish me. But so long as one is marching, I say let the drums beat and the flags fly!" [3]

[1] Letter to Sir F. Younghusband, K.C.S.I., January 23rd, 1914.
[2] Letter dated October 26th, 1914.
[3] Letter to Violet, Duchess of Rutland, dated September 13th, 1903.

And nothing ever shook his belief in the persistence of personality beyond the grave, for he never departed from his conception—formed at an early age—of the individual as a permanent entity, clothed for a little time with an earthly body as with a garment. His eclecticism did not, therefore, reject such articles of the Christian creed as the Communion of Saints, and he saw no inherent improbability in apparitions of the dead or the dying. His conviction as to the nature and destiny of individual man grew in strength as the years rolled by—"You can rest assured," he wrote, on November the 3rd, 1921, in his letter of sympathy to Lady Sandhurst on the death of her husband, "that wherever his emancipated spirit may be, it is well with him and that he will watch and wait for those whom he loved." And he was supremely happy in his belief, which was no mere theoretical supposition but a living and ever present certainty, that when death claimed him, ties of love and friendship which had given so great a zest to life would infallibly be renewed.

Here, then, was the controlling force that enabled George Curzon to rise superior to the disabilities of constant physical suffering and of a vivid and capricious temperament; that moved him to dedicate his life and talents to the service of the State; ever to set duty before convenience or inclination; "to pursue high ambitions," in the telling words of Lord Oxford, "by none but worthy means"; to take—by the general assent of his fellow countrymen—"an assured place in the long line of those who have enriched by their gifts and dignified by their character the annals of English public life."[1]

[1]Speech in the House of Lords on March 23rd, 1925.

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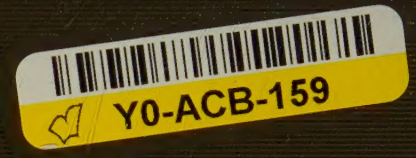
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